

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD

19 NOVEMBER 2020

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: M Parker (Chairman), J Ryan (Vice Chairman), D Howell, M McLoughlin, W Qais, J Ryan, P Thomas, C Williams, T Hodgson and M Brain

Councillors in Attendance: Councillor A Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

Officers: Perry Wardle (Assistant Director, Growth and Development)
Ann-Marie Attfield (UK Central Project Manager - Low Carbon Future Mobility)
Alexander Heath (Group Manager, Programme Development)
Paul Rogers (Democratic Services)

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting commenced at 6:01 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. MINUTES

Councillor McLoughlin noted that on page 10, second paragraph, the word 'stated' should be inserted for the sentence to read:

*'With regard to the subject of inclusive growth, Councillor McLoughlin **stated** there was not sufficient understanding expressed within the strategy....'*

RESOLVED:

Subject to the above correction, to agree the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board Public Minutes dated 22nd September 2020 as a true record.

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5. PROGRESS REVIEW OF THE LOW CARBON ENERGY FRAMEWORK AND NET ZERO ACTION PLAN

The report was presented by the UK Central Project Manager.

Members were advised that the report provided a baseline data update from February 2020. Scatter data detailed within the report also included all greenhouse gases. It was reported that emissions had reduced by regional / national projections. Key emissions sources were identified as including motorway networks, minor roads and diesel vehicles.

It was recognised that the Council had various levels of influence over time. It was reported that the Council's own emissions equated to 1.6% of the total for all Solihull emissions, with an influence over 75% of the total emissions recorded for the borough.

Members were advised that a key aim of the Low Carbon Energy Framework was to provide a Solihull specific approach to delivering net zero and to identify de-carbonisation projects going forward. Members were advised that it was important to capitalise on de-carbon, economic growth and inclusivity in transition towards net zero. Current on-going projects included a deliverable energy feasibility study, energy innovation zone and a carbon off-setting strategy.

It was reported to the Scrutiny Board that an established approach, baseline and action plan was in place to support and deliver the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan (NZCAP). Some engagement had taken place around the NZCAP via Member workshops with engagement scheduled to commence with the business sector in early December 2020. Officers were currently collating an evidence base, including outlining of trajectory to zero carbon and identification of interactions specific to Solihull to support NZCAP delivery. Officers will also identify metrics to measure effectiveness against the NZCAP, as well as any subsequent plans and strategies arising. A discussion paper for the NZCAP would be issued and consulted upon, which would support further honing of detail for the NZCAP for Solihull.

A key component of the NZCAP was identifying those projects which would ensure delivery of net zero. Part of the assessment exercise would include the business innovation programme.

The importance of communications and engagement around the NZCAP was recognised, with Officers seeking to engage the public despite the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were informed that Officers were working up funding bids in order to access Government funding to deliver decarbonisation of public buildings, whilst Solihull Community Housing (SCH) were drafting an Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

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SCH was also scheduled to commence a carbon baseline study which entailed study of associated costs, benefits arising and timelines.

Having received the presentation, questions were invited from Members of the Scrutiny Board, which in summary included the following:

Councillor Howell referenced 'leaving no one behind' in the NZCAP, which included businesses, associated opportunities and challenges. Councillor Howell welcomed the identification and inclusion of these subjects. It was noted businesses were effectively experiencing a stress test with the current pandemic and that moving forward they may be required to change their business models yet further in order to support delivery of the NZCAP objectives, which may require some period of time. Councillor Howell noted the references to metrics, inclusive growth and health benefits and queried whether health inequalities would also be addressed as part of the metrics. Finally, Councillor Howell questioned how Government infrastructure projects, such as HS2, could be used to help address emissions generated from the motorway network.

Members were informed that metrics for addressing health inequalities were still being designed with the intention of looking at the subject holistically. With regard to motorway emissions, Members were advised that it would take a collective effort involving the Council and a range of partners to address. The Council recognised it was a significant issue for the Council to address, with the Council being ranked as the 10th highest authority nationally for recorded emissions in the borough. This matter would be looked at in detail going forward.

Councillor Qais noted that communications and engagement was very important in driving positive behaviours. Concerning the projects identified to deliver the NZCAP, it was queried whether separate feasibility studies would be conducted for each distinct project. It was confirmed that actions would be identified and that there remained some capacity within the renewable energy project for developing a feasibility study at an early stage, incorporating cost benefit analysis.

Councillor McLoughlin questioned whether the Council had data for motorway users, particularly for those whom lived within the borough. Councillor McLoughlin stated that he recognised the rural aspect of some parts of the borough and the subsequent implications arising for travel by car, but stated that more action was required in urban areas to promote sustainable travel. Members were advised that the Council did not hold data for motorway journeys, which was more likely to be held by Highways England.

Councillor McLoughlin referenced paragraph 3.10 addressing per capita emission reductions in the report. Councillor McLoughlin stated that the Council was falling short in performance in this area when compared to regional neighbour authorities and noted that Solihull was starting at a higher per capita baseline, which amounted to less reduction of emissions compared to the wider region. Finally, Councillor McLoughlin

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noted that siting of future housing developments closer to employment hubs would support reduction in car travel and support sustainable travel and modal shift.

Councillor Mackiewicz (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing) replied, stating that he was confident that the NZCAP would be delivered, with national policy in support such as the Government announcement of a carbon free grid by 2030. Councillor Mackiewicz noted that in order to reach the stated objectives it would require individual responsibility and leadership. Leadership was identified as key, with the private sector being identified to increasingly energise and innovate in the zero carbon field. Councillor Mackiewicz identified the scrutiny function as having an important role to play in supporting delivery of the NZCAP, through holding people to account, supporting communications and facilitating engagement around the strategy.

Councillor Parker noted that engagement in support of the plan may be problematic in light of the pandemic and noted that no reference had been made of schools, colleges, young people or the role of apprenticeships and queried how young people could input into the plan. Councillor Parker recommended greater publicity for the plan through the Council's own website and publications. Officers recognised that the involvement of schools and young people in the plan was essential. With regard to the wider skills agenda and apprenticeships, Members were informed that this was a key strand of the plan addressing behaviour change, employment and skills.

Councillor Hodgson noted that 50% of all emissions were attributable to the transport network, for which the Council probably had the strongest level of influence over. Data demonstrated that there had been a significant reduction in rail and bus passenger numbers with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, while the modal shift for car journeys had not significantly changed. Councillor Hodgson noted that modal shift could be much influenced by the delivery of significant projects such as HS2, SPRINT, Metro public transport initiatives and the Council's walking and cycling strategy. Such initiative would support moving the public towards sustainable travel initiatives and support carbon reduction strategies. Councillor Hodgson supported engagement with young people to support delivery of the NZCAP, as well as that of Councillors, businesses, community and voluntary organisations and stakeholders when progressing the plan.

Councillor Mackiewicz (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing) noted that a significant challenge to be addressed was why the majority of people continued to prefer car ownership to using other modes of transport. Councillor Mackiewicz informed the Scrutiny Board that the Council had invested £16M to date in the Wildlife Ways project and Walking and Cycling Strategy for the borough.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that the issue of modal shift returned to the matter of providing urban environments which encouraged walking and cycling and led to sustainable forms of travel and that these areas with the Council's Local Plan should be prioritised by the Council and West Midlands Combined Authority in this respect.

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The Assistant Director (Growth and Development) advised Members that the Council's strategy *Solihull Connect* was adopted in 2016, through which action was being taken to implement the Walking and Cycling Strategy. Solihull Connect also addressed the boroughs wider transport infrastructure needs. Future iterations of Solihull Connect would be updated to capture and address the transport infrastructure and sustainability issues raised by the Scrutiny Board.

Councillor Williams questioned what sources of challenge had the NZCAP undergone to date and was informed that going forward the Climate Change Commission would be invited to provide independent, on-going challenge. Independent and critical challenge had been recognised as essential to the future success of the project. Wider implementation of the action plan would require significantly greater external involvement and engagement from various sources.

Councillor Howell observed that Solihull as a borough had rural and urban communities, which in some instances required different actions to meet their transport and accessibility requirements, which in turn impacted on car usage and emissions in the borough. Consequently, the action plan would need to apply a multi-faceted approach in its implementation.

Councillor Parker noted that the Scrutiny Board was unanimous in its support of the Low Carbon Energy Framework and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan and summarised the principle issues arising in reviewing the report, which included:

- Health Inequalities
- Leadership and the influence of the public sector in delivering 2030 and 2040 targets
- The role of Government
- Individual and collective behaviours
- Incentives to de-carbonise in the private sector to be identified
- The role and delivery of current and future strategies such as the Council's Walking and Cycling Strategy, facilitation of modal shift and the role of Solihull station and the HS2 project
- The future role of Councillors, young people, the business and private sector and Climate Change Commission in successfully delivering the Low Carbon Energy Framework and Net Zero Action Plan

Having considered the report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i). To note the progress made on the Low Carbon Energy Framework and the development of Solihull's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan;

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- (ii). To note the process going forwards including future engagement and next steps;
- (iii) To Recommend to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing that the Council engages with the Youth Parliament and young people generally as part of future engagement, consultation and governance processes pertaining to the Low Carbon Energy Framework and Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan; and,
- (iv) To agree that a Low Carbon Energy Framework and Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan Progress Report be included the Scrutiny Boards Work Programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Having considered the Work Programme 2020/21 report, Members of the Scrutiny Board, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- i. To receive an update via e-mail pertaining to Progress of the EV Strategy in lieu of a formal report to the Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for 18th January 2021; and,
- ii. To receive a progress update by e-mail on the Solihull Economic Recovery Plan prior to the formal Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for 18th January 2021.

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board
meeting closed at 7:15 p.m.