

North Yorkshire County Council

Climate Change Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 24 July 2019 at 2pm.

Present:-

County Councillor in the Chair – Stanley Lumley

County Councillors Helen Grant, Bryn Griffiths, David Goode, Paul Haslam, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson, Stuart Martin, Andy Paraskos, Clive Pearson, and Annabel Wilkinson

Also in Attendance

Executive Members: County Councillor David Chance, Caroline Dickinson, Carl Les, Patrick Mulligan and Greg White.

North Yorkshire County Council Officers: Neil Irving (AD Policy Partnerships & Communities), Daniel Harry (Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager), and Melanie Carr (Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies for Absence were received from County Councillors Derek Bastiman, John Ennis, Zoe Metcalfe & Lindsay Burr

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1. Welcome & Introductions

County Councillor Stanley Lumley welcomed representatives from the Council's five thematic overview and scrutiny committee, together with members of the Executive's Climate Change Task & Finish Group to the meeting.

The Chair confirmed the remit of the sub-committee and gave a brief background to the review which included an overview of the debate held at the Full Council meeting earlier in the day at which cross party support was given to the Council's approach to addressing climate change.

It was noted that the County Council already had a Carbon Reduction Plan in place and that a further commitment had been made to ensure the County Council was carbon neutral by 2030. Members also noted the commitment made by the Leader at Full Council that the Executive would receive quarterly update reports, and that an annual report would be provided to Council.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Questions or Statements

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

4. Context for the Approach to the Work of the Sub-committee

Considered –

An introductory report provided by Daniel Harry, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager.

Daniel Harry introduced the report which provided an overview of the international, national and regional response to date, to addressing the impacts of climate change.

The report acknowledged the range of greenhouse gases responsible for the greenhouse effect but focused on the reduction of carbon dioxide, noting that work was already ongoing to reduce the Council's carbon dioxide emissions.

The report also detailed a number of considerations at paragraph 17 and suggested that the review should not just scrutinise the challenges but also the future opportunities, with a focus on what more the Council could achieve through its own actions, policies and strategies etc, and how it might influence others.

Finally, Members were asked to consider the second report on the agenda before debating the way forward.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. Scope of Work of Executive Member Climate Change Task & Finish Group

Considered –

A report on the scope of the work being undertaken by the Executive Member Climate Change Task & Finish Group provided by Neil Irving, Assistant Director Policy Partnerships & Communities.

Neil Irving introduced the report which confirmed the County Council already had a very broad programme of projects, programmes, work streams policies and strategies that supported its efforts to protect and enhance the county's environment and economy.

He went on to detail the four basic work streams identified by the Executive Member Task & Finish Group to increase the organisation's impact and utilise its influence across the county.

In regard to understanding the Council's and county's carbon footprint, Neil Irving confirmed it would be possible to provide a baseline review of the council's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by November 2019, and a draft action plan by March 2020. He also noted that:

- The suggested impact assessment tool would challenge officers to identify the climate change implications associated with any council decision making.
- Any new governance arrangements would need to be embedded in the Council Plan in order for future climate change mitigation and adaptation to be fully achieved.

He cautioned against simplistic comparisons of the County Council's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions against other local authorities because of the impact of rurality on service delivery.

Finally he highlighted that influencing others across the county would be a bigger issue with associated costs.

Having noted that the county council's carbon reduction policies had not been updated since 2015/16, members suggested those policies should be formulated into a Carbon Reduction Plan (pro-active not reactive). They went on to debate the opportunities for reducing the county council's carbon dioxide emissions, and identified the following issues for the Executive's consideration:

- **Identifying Quick Wins** – It was agreed that in the immediate term it would be helpful if the County Council stated its renewed commitment to climate change, and identified some initial actions to demonstrate that commitment e.g.:
 - Introduce a Climate Change Champion;
 - Instruct the Area Constituency Committees to develop and draw together local level initiatives
 - Consider the introduction of a Citizens Assembly.
 - Assess its current actions to see what could be scaled up in the short term to start the programme of work.
 - Improve/increase signage in council owned buildings to switch lights off etc.
- **Identifying Best Practice** - Concern was expressed over the timeframe of the four work streams identified by the Executive Member Task Group. It was suggested that whilst not all the ways climate change was being addressed by other local authorities may be appropriate for NYCC, best practice and information on lessons learnt by other Local Authorities should be sought to help speed up the process.

Specifically in regard to the proposed impact assessment tool, whilst it was agreed it was a good idea, it was noted that the use of other similar tools already in place was patchy and required constant monitoring by Democratic Services.

- **Joint Working** - There is a need for a whole county approach not a county council approach, and there may be many opportunities to maximise carbon dioxide emissions reductions by working together e.g. Planning decisions, Local Development Plans, use of s.106 monies, land management etc. The Leader confirmed that the North Yorkshire LEP was already working on climate change initiatives, and that City of York Council and the District Councils had already expressed an interest in joint working.

It was agreed that any work with North Yorkshire District Councils would need to match the pace of change at NYCC, and it was suggested that Parish Councils be included if they could keep up.

- **Behavioral Change** – It was agreed that educating the public was key. There would be a long term benefit to improving education to children on the issues – some schools were already engaged, holding eco-days etc, others could be encouraged to do so. Improved use of social media would help engage adults and young people. Changing the mindset of the middle age bracket was crucial as they were the least engaged. The use of incentives or the introduction of a financial implication for not doing so, was suggested.
- **Influence & Leadership** – It was agreed the county council needed to influence behaviour at every level. Initially it could focus its influence on a small number of key areas or groups /partnerships to take action to help reduce overall carbon dioxide emissions.
- **Target setting** – It was suggested that the Executive could identify a series of annual carbon dioxide reduction targets over the 10 year period up to 2030 to ensure progress can be effectively tracked. It was suggested that officers be tasked with working out how to deliver a stepped change that achieves the targets set by the Executive. However the Leader was of the view that both Members and officers had a role to play in identifying how the council delivered on being carbon neutral by 2030.
- **Funding & Investments** – Members agreed funding opportunities and revenue generators needed identifying. This could be via the LEP, regional and national funding and/or through the use of Locality and Environmental Budgets. The county council would need to have a complete understanding of the financial implications associated with the

decisions being made. But it was recognised that it was about balance e.g. some actions may create a smaller cash return but result in a higher carbon reduction. It was suggested the Council's investments and Investment Strategy could be targeted at companies, organisations and business opportunities that promote carbon dioxide emission reductions.

- **Procurement** – A procurement approach could be developed that favoured suppliers that produce goods and supply services that have a high environmental gain. However it was suggested a measured approach to change was required in order to reduce the possibility of unintended consequences e.g. a holistic view of the implications would need to be considered when procuring services. Members accepted it would be difficult to only buy in services that were eco-friendly. They also recognised that local suppliers delivering goods over shorted distances resulted in lower carbon emissions.
- In regard to **Natural Heritage and Business**, Members questioned whether this was an opportunity for North Yorkshire to become a centre of environmentally friendly business, recreation and tourism through links with the LEP, LNP and Welcome to Yorkshire, and with a focus on the Yorkshire brand.
- In regard to the **movement of people and freight**, it was suggested that stronger representation be made to central government for an integrated transport policy for the region. Members also agreed:
 - Travel plans could be expanded to cover a broader range of options for public sector staff, private and voluntary sector employees linking in with other organisations (with a greater emphasis on cycling).
 - Electric charging infrastructure needed addressing to enable the expansion of ownership of electric cars
 - If bus usage is to be encouraged, bus fares will need to be addressed
- **Consumption and waste** - Members discussed reviewing current practices at a district, county and regional level to see whether there were opportunities to make changes. They also agreed the focus should include renew and reuse as well as recycle and suggested lessons could be learnt from the work that the LEP had done in Malton in creating the county's first 'circular economy' where everything is recycled or reused.
- Members considered the purchase of energy from sources with a lower carbon dioxide yield, and whether the Council could do more to develop more environmentally friendly **energy generation** on its land e.g. solar, wind, tidal, hydroelectric, methane from landfill etc. Specifically in regard to the refurbishment of County Hall, it was suggested that consideration should be given to a ground source heat pump.
- In regard to **other mitigation opportunities**, Members discussed tree buying initiatives, land for tree planting possibly linked into the 'Northern Forest' initiative, and opportunities to partner with the Dales and Moors National Parks.

Finally, members discussed the way forward for the sub-committee and following a summing up by the Chair, it was agreed that:

- i. The issues, options and opportunities to work to reduce the Council's Carbon dioxide emissions identified at the meeting be further explored by officers
- ii. The sub-committee meet again in mid to late November to consider officer feedback on:
 - The issues, options and opportunities
 - Their baseline review of the council's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;
- iii. At their next meeting, the Sub-committee agree a way forward i.e. whether to:
 - a) delegate elements of the required work to the 5 thematic Overview & Scrutiny Committees or;
 - b) progress the work on the review itself

6. Other business which the Chairman agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances

There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 4pm.
MLC