

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D Shaw (Chair)

Councillors J Aberley, G Heath, I Herdman, T Holmes, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes, J T Jones, T Riley, P Roberts, P Taylor, R Ward and N Yates.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors M Gledhill, A Hart, N Hawkins, K J Jackson, J Porter and P Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors T McNicol, K Martin and L Swindlehurst.

59 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

Councillor Wilkinson was substitute member for Councillor Martin and Councillor Gledhill substituted for Councillor Swindlehurst.

60 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

DECIDED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 12th July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

61 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN)**

There were no urgent items of business.

62 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

None were declared.

63 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.**

1. Question received from Councillor Hoptroff:

“Why isn’t Climate Change on the agenda for this meeting when it is the platform for the Portfolio Holder to report to members of the panel and allow scrutiny and support. This was agreed and promised when the Climate Change Emergency was approved in 2019 to be on every agenda of this committee?”

Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Biodiversity:

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On the 10th July 2019 this Council took the crucial step of declaring a Climate Change Emergency. The resolution from that meeting of the full Council included undertakings to:

- 1 Work towards making Staffordshire Moorlands carbon neutral by 2030
- 2 Call on the Government to provide guidance, powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible
- 3 Request that the Chair of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a sub committee to undertake detailed research with a view to developing an effective, achievable and costed plan for addressing climate change within the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 4 Ensure that all Council Bodies and Scrutiny Panels consider the impact of climate change and the environment when making decisions and reviewing Council policies and strategies.
- 5 Review progress made on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council.

Councillor Hoptroff's question quite rightly refers to the importance of providing a platform for Members of this Committee to scrutinise and support the Council's work towards achieving carbon neutrality. This is why one of the undertakings was to establish a specific sub-committee to provide the required support and scrutiny.

Since making this undertaking, the Climate Change Working Group has met on ten occasions to help formulate our action plan. However, the Council went beyond its initial undertaking and also established thematic sub-groups to consider the Council's emissions, Energy, Housing, Natural Environment, Travel & Transport, and Industry & Agriculture. These groups have also met regularly, often on a monthly basis, to provide further opportunities for Members to contribute to this agenda. The Council also extended membership of the Working Group to include the Moorlands Climate Action Group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs and all the members of the Working Group and the six Sub-Group for their support in developing our Climate Change plan.

The other undertaking was to review progress on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council. I am committed to presenting annual reports to both this Scrutiny Committee and to Full Council each year to coincide with the anniversary of the Council signing the Emergency declaration.

We will be looking at Part 2 of the Climate Change action plan in the coming months and this will be presented to both the Climate Change Working Group and this Committee to gain the valuable input of those two groups.

We have always said that the action plans will be a flexible document that will be updated on a regular basis and it is important that we have an on-going mechanism to involve Councillors in that process.

Most importantly, we must now have a strong focus on delivering our plan. I recognise the desire of Members to support the delivery of the Council's action plan and that only providing an annual update to the Committee and Full Council does not provide sufficient opportunities for Members to be engaged with delivery of the plan.

For those reasons, I intend to meet with the Chair of this Committee, the Chair of the Working Group, Officers and others to consider how the current structures need to

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change as we move from preparing the plan to monitoring its delivery and updating where necessary.

Officers are also working on the reporting arrangements so that this important priority is included in the quarterly performance reports that are provided to all Members.

It is important to remember that our intention is to put Climate Change at the heart of the Council's priorities and actions. All reports that are received by this and other Committees includes a section on Climate Change implications. In addition to updates on delivery of the plan, Members will have the opportunity to consider and scrutinise specific, detailed reports on such things as the Asset Management Strategy, Procurement Strategy, and the Parks and Open Spaces Management Policy.

By way of supplementary questions, Councillor Hoptroff asked if an item on Climate Change could be included as a standing item for each meeting of the Panel. Initially, the Chair was in agreement with this request. It was highlighted that a standing item could lead to duplication and therefore the Chair of this Panel and the Chair of the Climate Change Working Group would discuss this matter after the meeting.

Councillor Porter confirmed that Part 2 of the Climate Change Action Plan was programmed for the meeting on 8th November 2021. This was a complex document which would constantly evolve and would incorporate a costed plan.

Councillor Hoptroff queried the future of the Climate Change Working Group, as in his opinion, recommendations made by the Group were not taken into account. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that the formal scrutiny of the Climate Change Action Plan was within the remit of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Working Groups were appointed for a fixed period of time and had an end date.

2. Question received from Councillor Swindlehurst:

“The Government has announced a £338 million investment in walking and cycling, which, together with the Highway Code amendments should increase the potential for significantly less car use. Mindful that transport is the biggest source of carbon emissions resulting in premature death what provisions do we intend to implement to encourage active travel?”

Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Biodiversity:

Over the last 18 months, active travel had become more important than ever and would continue to increase in importance. The Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy included potential active travel routes such as Biddulph Valley Way, Monsal Trail and the Cresswell to Cheadle corridor. These schemes were a priority and the Council would apply for funding accordingly.

As substitute member for Councillor Swindlehurst, Councillor Gledhill explained how impressed he was with the number of children that had walked to school today. However, there was an issue at Westwood Road in Leek as cars were grid-locked, engines idled and cars were parked on double yellow lines. The pollution created by

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these factors was noticeable and he asked how the Council would work with partners to make this route safer and cleaner.

Councillor Porter agreed with the importance of health and well-being and how it linked with the climate agenda. He had met with officers at the County Council and highlighted a new campaign – Air Aware Staffordshire. He would continue to meet with representatives from the County Council and work in partnership. He gave examples of trial schemes where areas outside of schools were pedestrianised which had proved successful. This type of arrangement depended on the locality and partnership working with the school and community.

The second supplementary question was around large numbers of people crossing St Edward's Street in Leek without a zebra crossing, to attend regular town centre events and how such issues could be raised with the County Council.

In response, Councillor Porter would contact the Air Aware Staffordshire Team and suggested that Councillor Atkins could be contacted to act in her capacity as a County Councillor.

64 **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council was committed to reviewing its approach to community safety to reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The report, introduced by Mark Trillo – Executive Director, helped to deliver that commitment.

A wide variety of behaviour could be defined as 'anti-social' if it had a negative impact on others. In law, anti-social behaviour was defined as behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others (and nuisance in the housing context).

The Council had a duty to exercise its functions with due regard to the impact on anti-social behaviour. The Council had specific duties in relation to certain types of behaviours, such as noise nuisance.

The report detailed a draft policy covering the Council's response to anti-social behaviour and also a handbook that is intended to provide relevant advice to the residents of Staffordshire Moorlands.

In response to a query around the dilution of policing powers, members were assured this was not the case and the Council's role was to deal with general complaints and low level anti-social behaviour which did not include any criminal offenses. Dependant on the nature of the problem, the Council would work in conjunction with the Police to ensure the most suitable action was taken for residents.

A member of the Panel requested an officer contact list to refer to and the most appropriate way to channel queries would be discussed after the meeting with the Head of Communities and Climate Change. A case management system was also being looked into which would assist members with their case work.

It was also felt that a summary of the Handbook would be beneficial for residents and that resources should be directed into the provision of activities for young people. Members were advised that the Community Safety Plan incorporated multi-agency diversionary activities to prevent the occurrence of anti-social behaviour and details of the Plan could be shared at a future meeting of the Panel.

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DECIDED:

- 1) That the Panel notes the Council's responsibilities with respect to anti-social behaviour.
- 2) That the Panel recommends that the Cabinet approves the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- 3) That the Panel notes the Anti-Social Behaviour Handbook and assists in raising awareness of the handbook within the community.

65 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its Work Programme and agreed the items listed.

A suggestion was made for some of the items listed for the following meeting to be postponed to allow sufficient time for the Panel to scrutinise the Climate Change Plan – Part 2. The Chair advised that he would discuss the matter with the Chair of the Climate Change Working Group and agree the most suitable way forward.

DECIDED: That the Work Programme for 2021-2022 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm

_____ Chairman _____ Date