

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Sustainable Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday 4 June 2024
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present Councillors Stowe (Chair), Barnard, Bellamy, Booker, Eastwood, Holling, Hunt, McCarthy, Mitchell, Morrell, Murray, O'Donoghue, Osborne, Sheard and P. Wright

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received from Mrs E Iles in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Osborne declared a non-pecuniary interest as Cabinet Support Member Environment and Highways.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 were received.

4 Sustainability and Climate Change

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Paul Castle, Service Director for Environment & Transport, Barnsley Council
- Stacey Chaplin, Group Leader for Sustainability and Climate Change, Barnsley Council
- Councillor James Higginbottom, Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Highways, Barnsley Council

Councillor Higginbottom provided members with a brief overview of the progress made to date and the challenges and plans for the future of Barnsley Council's response to the climate emergency.

In the ensuing discussion and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:-

One of the biggest challenges faced was around supporting people to identify what is in their range of power and control and to influence residents to look at changes in a positive way. The Climate Partnership consisted of members from the Council and large organisations around the Borough, some of which had a global influence. The Partnership enabled the sharing of ideas and ways of working to reach the target of net zero by 2045.

In terms of timeframes given, these were ambitious in a sense of challenging to meet both organisationally and borough wide net zero. There would always be a question mark around timelines but an organisational target to be net zero carbon in its operations by 2040 and to support the Borough to be net zero carbon by 2045 was a target that could be delivered in.

Members were informed that the Positive Climate Partnership had been shortlisted for a national award for bringing together the private and public sector in order to achieve net zero. Bringing this to the national stage was seen as a way to influence other areas to engage with the wider sector. Work with central government, national and regional colleagues would continually be undertaken to learn lessons in ways of doing things in comparison to other organisations.

All Strategies are continually assessed for positive and negative impacts on the economy, environment and society. Every service area looks at the impact of extreme weather and how to deliver services and mitigate who they engage with. With regards to Civil Contingencies, one issue faced was from announcements by central governments, this is not always joined up to policy areas with a myriad of services and policies to try to embed. The service was in the process of updating the Sustainability Impact Tool to take all these into consideration.

There were a number of fixed points across the Borough to constantly measure air quality, members would be provided with further details and information.

The report indicated to members that the original proposed targets were not on target to be met. In answer to these concerns, members were informed that Audit had flagged this risk as red but that this was as a result of the data missing and unknown and that the original baselines and boundaries could not be understood. Members were reassured that work was being undertaken to rectify, strengthen and improve the data as to where it should start and end and that every person reporting in is using the right emissions framework. This was a complex area to measure and the Council itself had around 280 services who were all making positive steps to reduce carbon emissions. It was acknowledged that more work was needed to educate people to understand and make positive steps to improving carbon emissions to reach the target of net zero.

Members enquired whether it was thought that the climate change that was happening was due to a naturally changing climate opposed to one influenced by peoples behaviours. It was acknowledged that whilst climate does and has changed throughout history, there was scientific evidence to support the fact that the increase in temperature is accelerated and that collective changes in behaviour can impact this. A lot of organisations relied on nature for resources and the eco system and climate change was having an impact on things like farming which in turn can affect food prices. People taking small steps to help manage their contributions to climate change would eventually have a greater effect.

One of the biggest contributors to climate for the Council was the fleet transportation, it was noted that where possible steps to reduce this naturally would be taken, however financial budgets were in an extremely difficult position. Cost effective ways of procuring vehicles would be looked into to mitigate and improve reduced

emissions. Members were informed that a number of vehicles had already been replaced by electric ones. Two large charging programmes had taken place with 70 car charges being installed across the Borough and 34 car charging bases being installed on premises for fleet vehicles. Funding had been secured for the local electric infrastructure for those residents that did not have access to private driveways.

There were a number of fuels available across the Borough including diesel, petrol, hydrogen and vegetable oil. It was noted that conversations were being had with hydrogen developers and that market demand would determine when that came to the fore. Members heard that it was one issue in the procuring of electric vehicles and another to maintain them. Partners were leading the way in terms of feeding into a regional strategy and working together. In terms of a broad piece of work around organisations, the Climate Partnership was able to focus on those discussions with partners such as those in logistics.

Members enquired as to how the Sheffield City Region Citizens Assembly membership had been chosen. Members were informed that individuals had been chosen randomly and given some money to participate and that members represented a diverse pocket of the community. In terms of local engagement with communities, steps had been taken to involve more volunteers from the community in collaboration with the Communications Team and local Area Councils. The key would be to manage expectations in what could be delivered from the ideas put forward in order to mitigate dissatisfaction in the community. Barnsley had a good range of ways to bring together community leaders as representatives of voices in the community, be it from Councillors, Area Councils, Ward Alliances or other bodies.

In terms of shaping future planning developments, the Local Plan developed in 2019 included some principals embedded uplifts to ask developers to make contributions to biodiversity. More recently this had been changed to mandate developers on every site to make 10% improvements on biodiversity. If a developer is unable to meet this requirement, they are able to purchase credits from the authority to make improvements away from site.

Members enquired whether there was evidence of any change due to the various communications campaigns that had been held over the years. It was noted that this was difficult to measure but that one example was given that there had been a significant change in recycling habits and that behaviour change and how people act was the key to never stop communicating.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (iii) that the witnesses provide members with the most up to date air quality monitoring information;

(iv) that the witnesses consider ways of working with communities and engaging individuals via the Positive Climate Partnership and the wider work of the Council;
and

(v) that the witnesses do more to help individuals in the Council and partner organisations to understand the risk/implications of their work on the environment and how they can contribute to carbon reduction.

Chair