

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
24 OCTOBER 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, A J Baxter, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, H Spratt, G J Taylor, T R Ashton, S Bunney and P A Skinner

Councillor T Dyer was in attendance, and Councillor C Davie attended the meeting remotely. Councillor P Ashleigh-Morris also attended the meeting as an observer.

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Assistant Director Growth), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Dan Clayton (Sustainability Manager) and Chris Miller (Head of Environment), and Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer).

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

It was reported that under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor T Ashton replaced Councillor L Wootten, Councillor P Skinner replaced Councillor K Cooke, and Councillor S Bunney replaced Councillor M Boles for this meeting only.

29 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no interests declared at this point in proceedings.

30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman gave his support and sympathised with residents and businesses affected by flooding caused by Storm Babet, and thanked all the staff who were working to relieve its impact.

Councillor C Davie, Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning echoed the Chairman's sentiments and informed the Committee that the Floods Team had received approximately 600 reports of flooding incidents. Analysis had found that around 200 related to internal flooding incidents and was expected to increase. 190 near-misses were also reported, and 16 flood warnings remained in place across Lincolnshire – this was also expected to increase as water moved through catchments in the River Trent and River Witham.

The severity of Storm Babet led issues to be identified with the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme which the Executive Councillor assured would be thoroughly investigated.

Members noted the announcements and raised the following matters:

- The Committee also extended their sympathies to residents and businesses impacted by flooding.
- Members were receiving videos and photos from residents that depicted overflowing riverbanks.
- The Executive Councillor assured the Council continued to work with partners in supporting affected residents.
- Concern was raised that some flooding incidents had not been reported.
- The Executive Councillor requested that the Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee conducted a review into Storm Babet, section 19 investigations, and whether intelligence received regarding the storm was managed sufficiently.
- The impact of climate change was increasing, and extreme weather was becoming increasingly regular and severe.
- Members considered whether the Environment Agency held sufficient resources to ensure accountability and prevent flooding.
- The Executive Councillor suspected the government would have to invest more capital to manage river and coastal defenses.

The Executive Councillor also made the following announcements:

- Team Lincolnshire continued to facilitate business growth and had held their first annual conference on 17th September 2023.
- The Council's Made Smarter programme continued work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other councils to support Lincolnshire's manufacturing sector; 87 businesses had been assisted up to March 2023, and 52 had received support this financial year.
- A Toolkit was being developed to help tourism businesses utilise opportunities from the completion of the King Charles III England Coastal Path expected in 2025.
- 60 grants of £1000 would be available for organisations supporting the Council's government-funded programme to help adults improve their numeracy skills 'Multiply' next year. Employers and community groups were encouraged to apply to become a 'Lincolnshire Multiply Champion'; last year 48 Champions helped the council deliver 267 courses to 1,260 learners across the county.

- The Council continued to work with the two electricity Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) in Greater Lincolnshire and was utilising an online interactive electricity supply and demand analysis tool which helped inform the Council's and the DNOs infrastructure investments.
- The South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone in South Holland continued to facilitate private sector investment, and 'the Hub' innovation centre would reach 50% occupancy by the end of 2023.
- 150 small business tenants continued to receive support in the Council's five business centres, innovation centre and industrial and commercial units.
- Lincolnshire's Going Global Conference was being held on 27th November at the International Bomber Command Centre.
- The next Taming the Dragons investment pitching event was being held on Wednesday 22nd November at 5pm at the University of Lincoln International Business School.
- The first business digital masterclass workshop on 'AI in Marketing' was being held online on 2nd November.

32 LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CARBON REPORT 2022-2023 (GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REPORT 2022-23)

Consideration was given to a report from Dan Clayton, Sustainability Manager, on the Council's Carbon Report for 2022-2023 which provided an update on greenhouse gas emissions from Lincolnshire County Council. Chris Miller, Head of Environment, was also in attendance for this item.

Members were guided through the report and were informed that indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with business travel, outsourced services and water treatment (Scope 3) were typically highest, and the Council was expected to be similar. Direct emissions from Council-owned/controlled sources (Scope 1) and indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, heating and cooling (Scope 2) had made better initial progress in reducing emissions.

There were still challenges in achieving net zero emissions and it was anticipated that considerable investment was required to convert older buildings to be more energy efficient.

It was noted that the Council had made an encouraging start with emissions reducing by over 50% since 2016-17. Additionally, the Committee was informed that funding provision was available for energy efficiency, and savings were reinvested.

During the discussion, the following matters were highlighted:

- The reduction of electricity use was welcomed and important as it was a higher carbon fuel than gas; a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) would measure energy used per square metre and was anticipated to show carbon reduction comprehensively.

- Government funding was received to conduct a decarbonisation plan for the 20 buildings with the highest energy use; upon Members' request, the Sustainability Manager agreed to explore the potential use of ground source heat pumps as a sustainable energy alternative. Further assurance was provided that decisions to switch to ground or air sources could be built into long-term maintenance activities.
- Members highlighted the importance of correctly disposing of old Council-owned equipment and vehicle parts; the Sustainability Manager assured that the Procurement Team were establishing new environmental criteria for procurement, especially concerning vehicles, electronics, and recycling.
- Some Members welcomed that the report acknowledged greenhouse gas emissions would have reduced regardless of efforts due to a national pattern observed following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Members raised that Figure 6 depicted reduced emissions however the most recent data was from 2019; it was resultantly clarified that the data was from the Carbon Management 3 Plan which was produced in 2019. Assurance was given that the publication of the Carbon Management 4 Plan at the end of 2023 would provide more recent data.
- Academies were omitted from the emission data.
- It was suggested whether photovoltaic (PV) solar energy could be utilised in maintained schools. The Sustainability Manager considered this viable given the implementation of similar schemes at County Farms, and informed that over 2% of energy consumption was from PV energy and supported a target of 5%. An annual tariff was also available from some solar panels which could be reinvested back into energy efficient infrastructure.
- It was proposed that biomass could replace oil-generators in older buildings however the Sustainability Manager noted that biomass had not been explored due to market volatility.
- Members queried whether the emissions generated from home-to-school transport (which was facilitated by the Council) was included within the scope of the report and analysis. It was noted this would be complex to calculate and would fall under Scope 3; the Sustainability Manager agreed this could be included in future reports.
- The Sustainability Manager agreed to investigate unnecessary school car park lighting and informed that schools were directly responsible for their budget. Additionally, the Department for Education had published a policy paper on sustainability strategy for schools which addressed issues of energy efficiency on school sites.
- Questions were raised regarding the extent of cooperation between the Council and local organisations in PV installation; Members were subsequently informed that the launch of a new Community Energy Fund was expected and would be distributed by the Midlands Net Zero Hub. Additionally, the Council was working with West Lindsey District Council to establish a community energy scheme.
- Beach nourishment could be beneficial in reducing the Council's carbon footprint.
- The strong commitment to present emission levels annually was welcomed by the Committee.

- The vehicular mileage of the Council, particularly under Scope 3, was increasing with 12 million miles travelled between 2022-23. The Sustainability Manager acknowledged the increase despite the shift to remote working and noted that some meetings with Adults, Children's Services and Highways meant that travel as unavoidable in some cases. It was also noted that the size and rurality of Lincolnshire contributed to these emissions, and poor public transport would affect Lincolnshire's ability to reach net zero. It was suggested that staff engagement exercises could reduce mileage.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee notes the work that has been done to quantify the carbon dioxide emissions across the County Council's operations; and
2. That the Committee supports the work that is underway to reduce these emissions.

33 POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW BY SCRUTINY PANEL A

Consideration was given to a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to suggest topics for an in-depth scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A for consideration and decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) at its meeting on 21 December 2023.

Members were advised that any proposed topic should not duplicate work being carried out elsewhere by Lincolnshire County Council or any of its partners, nor be overly broad to ensure a timely completion of an in-depth review.

The Executive Director of Place did not propose a topic for consideration by Scrutiny Panel A due to the completion of two Scrutiny Reviews under the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee's remit in 2022/2023; the existing allocation of the review topic allocated to Scrutiny Panel B was Traffic Management Policy Review which aligned with the Place directorate's remit and the presence of two significant Transformation Projects within Communities (Place) that would potentially create substantial workload demands.

Nonetheless, Members were invited to make suggestions for potential topics, and during the discussion the following matters were highlighted:

- It was suggested that the effects of draft devolution deal on the environment and economy of Lincolnshire could be considered.
- Opportunities to improve the relationship/interface between internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), water boards, the Environment Agency and Highways was also proposed. It was highlighted that the Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee may be establishing a Working Group which would eventually provide a

comprehensive review of this interface; given resource pressures, it was debatable as to whether this topic would cause duplication of their work.

- Section 19 investigations, issues concerning water ownership, emergency planning consistency and sandbag provision were further suggested as potential topics. These were noted, however were not proposed as these would cause a duplication of work due to be undertaken by the Flood and Water Manager Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman highlighted there were no formal recommendations proposed to OSMB by the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee for an in-depth scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be advised that the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee does not wish to put forward any suggestions for a scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A, on the basis of the statement from the Executive Director, as set out in section 6 of the report.

34 THEDDLETHORPE GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY WORKING GROUP - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Justin Brown, Assistant Director – Growth, which provided the Committee with a 6 monthly update on the work of the Theddlethorpe Geological Disposal Facility Working Group.

It was highlighted that the report addressed three main developments: proposal of a public test by 2027; further shaping of the work of the Community Partnership, and commencement of site evaluation studies which will inform decisions over the site.

The Committee was guided through the report, and Members were reminded that the Council joining the community group did not mean that it supported the proposals, and the community and residents were the decision-makers regarding this matter.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Members highlighted that the evaluation process of the site could take 15 years according to the report. The Assistant Director – Growth clarified that Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) would notify the public about various aspects of the development by 2027, and emphasised the action plan ought to be enacted quickly to ensure all reports and information could be collated in a manner that led to the decision to be taken quicker. It was clarified that the detailed and necessary information gathering required for the engineers building the site would take the remainder of 15 years.
- The engineering feasibility chart within the report did not include an assessment of rail connections at the Theddlethorpe site and Members noted it would be likely that necessary materials would be transported via rail. The Assistant Director – Growth

informed the Committee that the Council was involved in a transport feasibility study.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee notes the report and the progress and developments identified;
2. That the views of the Committee are echoed in further formal communications and interactions with NWS as part of the progression of the activities planned; and,
3. That a further update be shared with the Committee in the next six months.

35 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme.

Members were informed that there had been no amendments to the published work programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.35 am