

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors E. Gibson, Lauchlan and Porthouse.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bonallie, Heron, D. Richardson, I. Richardson, Scott, Tye and A. Wright.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Policy Review 2011/12: Draft Final Report

The Chief Executive submitted the Policy Review report (copy circulated) detailing the evidence, research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process and asked the Committee to comment on this for relevance, clarity and accuracy.

The Policy Review into low carbon vehicles in the delivery of public services had clear links to the Council's Strategic Priorities of Attractive and Inclusive City and Prosperous City. The Review also links to the Council's Corporate Improvement Priorities, Delivering Customer Focused Services and Efficient and Effective Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer presented the report and requested Members feedback.

The Chairman commented that he had not been overly enamoured with the choice of Policy Review at the beginning but was now most glad to have been convinced to pursue it as this Review had turned out to be a valuable piece of work.

The Chairman wished to thank Councillor E. Gibson for her contribution and attendance at every meeting/site visit arranged and commented that there had been great engagement with external partners and he was very impressed with the response received.

The Chairman also commented that we now had an evidence base to show value in changing our fleet to electric cars, if not vans at the present time.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that she had been unsure over the Review also as she did not have a great knowledge of the subject, but felt as the process had moved along she had learned a great deal.

In relation to Page 13 of the report, Councillor Porthouse enquired if the key facts and figures were for the UK and if we could get Sunderland specific statistics.

Ms. Lancaster advised that the figures were for the UK and she would amend the final report to show this and would also look into obtaining Sunderland specific statistics.

Neil Cole, Lead Policy Officer for Planning advised that DEFRA used to collate emission data and the information was released in July every year but was two years behind. This could also be broken down regionally.

Ms. Lancaster commented that if the data was available in July, she could provide Councillor Porthouse with this separately or she could put the most current available information in the final report.

Councillor Porthouse referred to page 47 of the report and Sunderland's aim to reduce its emission by 29% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, commenting that we needed to know what our emissions were now so we had a starting figure to see how much we had to reduce by.

Councillor Porthouse also commented that he wouldn't object to the purchase of a couple of vans now to carry out tests.

Ms. Lancaster commented that during a recent visit to SASMI, they had advised that as soon as the new Nissan van was released, cost should reduce, so the view at the present time was to wait.

The Chairman referred to Recommendation (f) on page 43 of the report, advising that the 'watching brief' on developments of technology for low carbon vehicles would include vans.

Councillor Porthouse suggested that we purchase a couple of vans now, even if they weren't financially viable now, to help support the industry and wished to congratulate Officers on the report overall.

Ms. Lancaster advised that the report would come back to Committee once it had been to Cabinet so that Members could have further input.

Councillor Lauchlan also wished to echo Members comments that he had not been keen on the topic for the Review originally but had become more involved/informed and had enjoyed the work over the year.

The Chairman commented that this was a serious issue and he was pleased no one could say the Committee had paid 'lip service' in trying to achieve our targets.

Councillor Tate commented that the Fleet Manager would now be more informed to proceed on the way forward and with the cost of diesel rising and the positive effects electric vehicles would have on the environment, this would bode well for future generations.

1. RESOLVED that the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee had taken evidence from a variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations to the Cabinet were outlined below:-

- (a) that the Scrutiny Committee be informed of the outcome of the Fleet and Transportation Review and progress in regard to implementation;
- (b) that the Council considers implementing appropriate targets for the replacement of its current fleet cars with electric counterparts based upon the findings and recommendation of Cenex with a view to revisiting the cost benefit analysis for larger vans as capital costs change;
- (c) that the Council considers an electric car pool system for its staff and that the appropriateness of extending this to the wider community is investigated;
- (d) that the Council commissions a comprehensive training programme for drivers should electric vehicles be utilised within the fleet;
- (e) that the impact of efforts made to establish the city as a 'Low-Carbon City' be continually monitored to ensure tangible benefits to the city;
- (f) that the Council considers a range of innovative methods of reducing carbon emissions from all forms of transport and keeps a 'watching brief' on the developments of technology for low-carbon vehicles;
- (g) that the Council explores way in which to encourage partners to explore the use of low-carbon vehicles where appropriate;

- (h) that the Council collaborates with NEPO to present the business case to the region's local authorities and other public sector bodies, to gain the level of commitment required to progress this agenda;
- (i) that NEPO considers undertaking further research and analysis to ensure there is a clear business case for regional procurement;
- (j) that any procurement, whether regional or the Council acting as an individual organisation, maximises the opportunities available to local suppliers; and
- (k) that the Committee received specific progress updates on the improvements to public transport in regard to reducing carbon emissions as part of wider annual updates given by Nexus.

Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform the Committee of the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2010/11.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Cole presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

The Chairman referred to the Authority's performance on waste, which he believed was phenomenal and showed the City's dedication to recycling with the landfill disposal dropping down to 66%. This was fantastic and he looked forward to seeing those figures reduce further in the future and we should be proud of our performance.

The Chairman also referred to the paragraph on Renewable Energy and enquired if there were any plans in the pipeline to reach the 22MW capacity target.

Mr. Cole advised that there were plans which could not be disclosed at present.

In response to Councillor Porthouse's enquiry as to where the remaining turbines were situated, Mr. Cole advised that he did not have the details at hand. The Chairman advised that the report mentioned 'planned and installed' so not all turbines were actually in operation yet.

Councillor Porthouse commented that he had recently passed a property which had solar panels installed, this had appeared unsightly and suggested this could be a topic for a future Policy Review.

The Chairman commented that the Monitoring Report had improved year on year and wished to thank Mr. Cole for bringing it to the Committee.

2. RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the Annual Monitoring Report.

Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: The Community Infrastructure Levy

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) apprising the Committee of the background to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as a mechanism to secure contributions from developers towards new infrastructure. The report provided background as to how CIL would be developed in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor E. Gibson raised concerns over the possibility our CIL money could be used for projects outside of Sunderland and commented that it was worrying we would not know who controlled the money.

Mr. Cole advised that it was possible the Area Regeneration Boards could allocate the funds.

Councillor Porthouse queried the requirements of applications in terms of size that would have to pay CIL as he believed this should be aimed more at developers than residential applications.

Councillor Porthouse also commented that these costs would ultimately be passed on to the price of new developments/homes and agreed with Councillor E. Gibson's concerns in relation to CIL money being used outside of Sunderland.

The Chairman also echoed Members concerns that the monies could be pooled and who would make the decision on where it was distributed, whether this would be a Member decision or delegated to Officers. The Chairman also commented that at least with Section 106 money, there had been a semblance of funding going towards the particular Ward in question.

Mr. Cole advised that Member involvement would be fundamental to the process.

The Chairman commented that if more income could be generated through the levy, then fine, as it could prove useful so long as Members had an input.

Councillor Tate commented that it needed to be both Members and Officers that made the decisions.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.