

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

18th July 2023

- Present:** Councillor Karen Lewing in the Chair
Councillors Bisset, Cleary, Cookson (Vice-Chair), Cooper, Cross, Desayrah, Jagger, Smith and Udall
- Officers:** Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities
David Sutton, Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy
Sandra Green, Head of City Services
Douglas Henderson, Bereavement Services Manager
Ruth Corral, Sustainability Team Leader
- Apologies:** Councillor Roberts

8 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Desayrah for Councillor Sadiq.

9 Declarations of Interest

None.

10 Public Participation

None.

11 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12 Carbon Emissions Projections and Progress Update for the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan

The Committee considered a report on carbon emissions projections and progress update for the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan.

The following appendices were attached to the report; Appendix 1 – outline of the emissions of the Council and activities that must take place to decarbonise the Council; Appendix 2 – outline of the emissions for the Council with a look ahead at some of the key changes which would need to happen to allow for the necessary carbon reductions to achieve carbon neutrality; and Appendix 3 – an action-by-action update of the action plan.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy presented the report and highlighted paragraph 4 of the report which related to the summary of carbon emission profiles, progress and projections.

The Committee’s attention was also drawn to the pie chart at paragraph 4.3 of the report which related to the Council emissions for 2021-22, which shows that reducing or eliminating emissions from key sources such as fleet, Crematorium and Leisure Centres is fundamental to the Council becoming carbon neutral. The pie chart at paragraph 4.10 which related to the Worcester emissions profile 2020 shows that emissions come from a range of sources, the domestic sector being the largest.

Paragraphs 7-13 of the report provided a commentary on a theme-by-theme basis covering Carbon Neutral City Council, Carbon Neutral Worcester, Sustainable Economy, Natural Environment, Preparing for Climate Change, Resource Efficiency and Engagement.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy and the Sustainability Team Leader responded to questions from Committee Members on various aspects of the report and the appendices.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report and in particular:

- 1. the significant activity that has been undertaken and is continuing in order to deliver the agreed action plan, focused on carbon emission reduction and other environmental improvements;**
- 2. the reductions in the Council’s carbon emissions that has been achieved since 2018;**
- 3. note the potential route to carbon neutral for the Council, and that the actions that support this are subject to a high level of uncertainty and risk; and**
- 4. the reductions in the City’s emissions and the requirement for national policy to deliver the changes required for the city to become carbon neutral by 2030.**

13 Heat Networks Detailed Project Development Study

The Committee considered a report on the Heat Networks detailed project development study. Appendix 1 attached to the report provided details of ‘What is a Heat Network’.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy presented the report highlighted that there were already over 14,000 heat networks in operation across the UK, supplying heat and hot water to approximately 480,000 customers. Other benefits of Heat Networks were outlined in paragraph 2.6 of the report.

In December 2022 the Council applied to Government’s Heat Network Delivery Unit for funding to undertake full detailed project development enabling the heat network concept to progress to the next stage.

The application was successful, and the Council had been awarded £230,000 for the work. It is proposed that the Council contributes £5,000 to complete the match funding requirements as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

The consultant-led detailed project development stage will give the City Council, Worcester University, Heart of Worcester College, Sanctuary Housing and other key stakeholders a clear route forward to the build out of the network.

The Deputy Director – Corporate Policy and Strategy responded to questions from Committee Members on various aspects of the proposal.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agrees to:

- 1. accept the award of £230,000 arising from the bid to the Government’s Heat Networks Delivery Unit to undertake a detailed project development study for a Worcester City Heat Network;**
- 2. allocate £5,000 in match funding, from the Environmental Sustainability enabling budget; and**
- 3. delegate authority to the Deputy Director - Corporate Policy and Strategy in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee to undertake the necessary procurement and award of contract.**

14 Bereavement Facilities Review

The Committee considered a report on the Bereavement Services Facilities Review.

At its meeting on 14th March 2023 the Committee received an update report setting out the need for the development of Astwood Crematorium and a summary of appraisal work that had been carried out for the Council to better understand its options for how it could continue to provide a crematorium facility into the future.

The Corporate Director – Homes, Operations and Communities in presenting the report provided background for new Members.

At the meeting in March the Committee approved funding to enable a technical feasibility study to be carried out, which was provided by specialist consultants, CDS and was attached as appendix 1 to the report. CDS had been able to develop three potential options (Options A-C) for redesign.

As part of the work to investigate the options available to the Council for continuing to provide a crematorium, the Council must pay attention to The Crematorium Act 1902 as outlined in paragraph 3.2 of the report. After seeking Counsel’s advice, the options for redevelopment were considered compliant with legislation.

Options A-C were outlined in paragraphs 3.4-3.21 of the report. The report sought approval for Option B to be progressed to a detailed design stage which would include full costings and be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for final consideration.

The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities referred Committee Members to paragraph 4 of the report which related to the cremator types. Although Members were not being asked to approve what type of cremators, details were provided in the report as to whether gas or electric would be appropriate. A comparison of operating costs was provided at paragraph 4.10. Environmentally, installing electric cremators will reduce NOx emissions by a third and reduce CO² emissions by up to 80% if operated through a green tariff.

A cost comparison (Capital/Revenue) was provided at paragraphs' 5.2-5.8 of the report. As part of the financial and budgetary implications the report sought approval from the Committee to recommend to Council an adjustment to the Capital programme of £250,000.

The Corporate Director – Homes, Operations and Communities and the Bereavement Services Manager responded to questions from Committee Members on various aspects of the proposal.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agrees to:

- 1. note the contents of the report and, in particular, the 'CDS Feasibility Review of Cremator Replacement at Astwood Crematorium' at Appendix 1;**
- 2. approves preferred Option B as set out within the report and delegates authority to the Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair to procure and appoint design and development consultants to develop detailed and fully costed designs for approval;**
- 3. recommend to Council a capital budget allocation of £250,000 to complete the work referred to in recommendation 2; and**
- 4. note that as a major capital project, further updates and requests for approvals will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee.**

15 Quarter 1 Performance Report for 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 1 performance for Environment Committee for 2023/24.

The Head of City Services presented the report and highlighted the main points. Specific reference was made to the Riverside Park improvements to maintain and enhance Green Flag status which currently had a rag rating of red which she explained was due to Covid. It is hoped that the project will be completed by the end of quarter 2.

The Committee's attention was also drawn to a new project, Electrifying Worcester City Council's fleet and it was reported that the City Council's new Fleet Manager will be looking at this transition, electric sweepers to also be reviewed as part of the overall fleet replacement programme.

The Head of City Services responded to questions from Committee Members particularly around contamination of household recycling and fixed penalty notices breakdown.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's quarter 1 performance for 2023/24.

16 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 8.29p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
7th November 2023