

Climate Change Advisory Board

Monday, 09 October 2023

19:30pm

Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

Councillors: Deborah Croxton
Shane Mochrie-Cox
Ektaveen Thandi

Sarah Parfitt Director (Corporate Services)
Darren Everden Assistant Director (Transformation and IT)
Nicole Arthur Head of Housing Operations
Saida Shaikh Climate Action Delivery Manager
Joshua Arthur Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability)
Finley Treadwell Career Graded Surveyor
Ben Clarke Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

29. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

30. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Climate Change Advisory Board that took place on Monday, 9 October 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

31. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

32. Presentation on water-saving initiatives, work with Ellenor Hospice, and decarbonisation at Springvale Court

The Board were provided with a presentation that showcased the projects of the Housing Energy & Sustainability Team during April – October 2023.

The Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability) guided Members through the report and highlighted key points around the projects, performance, and accolades of the Team.

The presentation had been published and was available within the agenda pack.

Following questions from Members, the Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability) explained that:

- Five hundred Council houses had received loft and cavity wall insulation this year; there was an ongoing program to survey the rest of the Councils housing stock for any necessary insulation works. Insulating the Council housing stock would help to

improve the EPC ratings of those homes as well as benefitting tenants and the council through reduced energy usage and therefore cost.

- Ellenor Hospice collected unwanted and left behind furniture in Gravesham void properties; as long as they are not damaged or unworkable although they are unable to take gas cookers as they do not have the qualifications to service these before resale. The team were not able to currently recycle or fix damaged white goods, but the team were always looking at news ways of dealing with left behind items.
- The team received data from water sites where the Council was the bill payer; that data was used to determine the highest water consuming sites and the sites were then prioritised accordingly to receive control flow regulator water saving devices
- With regards to stock performance, the team advised that one barrier to improving houses that had an EPC rating below a D was access issues to the properties. Council staff were prepared to carry out the work to improve the EPC ratings of the properties, but tenants were resistant to the works being carried out or letting staff into their properties. Some tenants did not want the hassle of a retrofit but the team would continue to remain in contact with all housing stock that required further work. In the meantime, there was plenty of other work that would be undertaken in other Council properties.

The Committee thanked the officers for their detailed presentation and commended the work of the team, especially the work undertaken with Ellenor Hospice.

33. Climate Change Delivery Plan

The Board was presented with the Climate Change Delivery Plan for consideration and to set out preparation for the council's fourth Annual Report.

The Climate Action Delivery Manager directed Members to appendix two which provided specific actions with officer updates, along with an indication of resource implication and timeframe setting out how the council would work towards its climate change ambitions, as per the approved Climate Change Strategy.

The Climate Action Delivery Manager took Members through appendix two and highlighted a number of key actions to the Board. Members were advised that green represented that the action was in progress and yellow meant the action had been delayed and completed actions are highlighted in grey

The Climate Action Delivery Manager advised that there were a number of actions that had revised timelines which were due to delays caused by Government policies, changes in technologies or funding being unavailable. The new timelines were considered to be more realistic in the current policy and economic climate.

The Chair thanked the Climate Action Delivery Manager for the detailed work plan and reiterated to Members the reasoning for the revised timelines and advised that the Council would work within its available resources and not allow any overspend. However, the Chair assured the Committee that all actions were still aimed to be completed by 2030 to meet the Councils carbon neutrality pledge.

Members raised points around the building of the new leisure centre to replace Cascades and the importance of ensuring it was energy efficient to mitigate the large energy costs the Council currently had to pay.

The Chair asked that:

- Wording be inserted into appendix two explaining that some actions had been delayed due to finance issues, but the Council were working within the allocated budget to deliver the actions and the Councils intention was still to have them all completed by 2030
- A separate table be created and inserted into appendix two that showcased the actions that had been completed

Members noted the report.

34. Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) emissions statistics

The Board were updated on the latest Green House Gas Emissions data published by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) took Members through the report and highlighted key figures regarding greenhouse gas emissions in Gravesham for 2021. The statistics published by DESNZ lag by two years. Members noted that the figures hadn't increased significantly since the last results were released for 2020. The two largest areas for emissions within the borough were Domestic Properties and Transport, at around 45% each; a detailed breakdown of each area and their greenhouse gas emissions could be found in the report.

The Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) explained that the statistics would be used to help finetune the Councils strategy, for example, to assist local business to reduce their energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions.

Following Member questions, the Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) explained that:

- Unfortunately, there weren't any models available to Gravesham that could be used to feed data into to make projections for businesses; although DESNZ provided the statistics, the Council did not receive much information as to how the statistics were compiled
- The yearly total CO2 emissions for the borough in 2021 was partly reduced through the decarbonisation of the electrical grid which reduced electrical CO2 emissions. The lockdowns and limited travel availability repressed the transport industry in 2020 and the figures remained stable into 2021
- The Council held events to advertise what energy saving devices were available to residents and work was already being undertaken in Gravesham housing stock
- The majority of rail transport that went through Gravesham was electric; HS1 and all routes to Charring Cross were electric. There were a small number of diesel operated trains that drove through the borough transporting goods
- Bus transport in Gravesham was predominantly diesel based power but as part of the new fastrack programme there would a number of electric buses driving the fast track route. The bus industry faced similar issue as the Council with cost of electric vehicles, their longevity and what was available to them

Members noted the report.

35. Electric Vehicle Charge Point update

The Board were provided with an update on the progress of the installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers on council-owned land in the borough.

The Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) took Members through the report and highlighted key figures regarding the amount of EV charging points in the Borough:

- Gravesham had installed 52 EV charge points on Council land and as of 1st July 2023, as reported by the DfT, the number of EV chargers in Gravesham per 100,000 of the population had increased to 57.1
- Due to the increase, Gravesham had the fourth most EV charging points per 100,000 of the population out of all Kent authorities as shown in the graph at 1.7 of the report
- The Connected Kerb sites were almost fully complete; Osney Way was still outstanding due to a lease agreement with the Church however Legal were dealing with the issue and it would proceed once final sign off on the site was given
- The next steps was looking at Council sites where EV charging points had been installed and reviewing the usage data; the data would be used to see if there was a need to expand to other car parks
- Existing sites that had been deemed economically unviable would also be revisited in the future
- In 2024, the government would be making available to upper-tier authorities funding for the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme which would support on street charging projects. KCC would receive the fund and trickle it down to Gravesham via an arrangement such as with Connected Kerb or directly through KCC
- KCC were currently developing the fifth version of their Local Transport Plan which, for the first time, incorporated reductions in CO2 emissions. It was anticipated that the plan would be published in 2024

The Chair stated that if KCC's Local Transport Plan was similar to the fourth version then Gravesham would not be adopting it the way they presented it as each previous version had supported the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC). Gravesham Council unequivocally did not support the LTC and would not change its view on the matter. If support for the LTC was still in the fifth plan then it would not be adopted, and the plan would be cherry-picked for agreeable aspects. However, if the whole plan had to be accepted then Gravesham would not accept the plan.

In response to the Chairs points, Cllr Mochrie-Cox confirmed that discussion around the plan had already taken place with KCC; the plan was considered 'emerging' so there was still plenty of opportunity for Gravesham to make representation. A County wide approach to transport was not the correct approach, local needs needed to be taken into account for each borough.

Concerns were raised by the Committee over the switch to electric vehicles by 2025 and the need for the Government to speed up the implementation of infrastructure to support electric vehicles. Points were raised around electric vehicles being expensive, some roads being unsuitable for recharging points and not everyone having a drive to charge their vehicles from home.

In response to a Members question concerning grant funding for the Connected Kerb scheme, the Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) advised that the Government grant was from the on-street residential charging scheme.

Members noted the report.

36. Council Building Heat Decarbonisation Plans

The Board were informed on preparations to draw up heat decarbonisation plans for the council buildings which represented the highest greenhouse gas emitters within the property estate.

The Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) took Members through the report and highlighted key figures and challenges regarding the decarbonisation plans for the Civic Centre, Cygnet Leisure Centre, Cascades Leisure Centre, and Brookvale Depot.

In response to the Council having two unsuccessful bids to the Governments Levelling Up bill, the Chair stated that the Council had not been successful in receiving Government grants and reviews had been undertaken to see what other local authorities had successfully attained; some Councils had received between £70 and £100 million whereas Gravesham had, only received £1 million in the last two-three years which was not equitable. The Council would continue to bid on all necessary funding in the future.

The Chair advised that there were a number of issues with the Civic Centre building which needed urgent repairs and decarbonisation in order to stop hefty bills from accumulating over the next couple of years. With regards to Cascades, it could be retrofitted and repaired as well if a new Leisure Centre was not able to be built but it was likely work would not start until next year due to budgetary constraints. The Chair assured the Committee that the Council were investigating all possible ways forward with the proposed plans for Council buildings.

Members noted the report.

37. Net Zero Gravesham resident information event feedback

The Board was updated on the Resident Information and Advice Event held at the Woodville on 5 September.

The Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) advised that the event was hosted in the Woodville, with additional visible activity taking place on the Community Square, and ran from 3pm to 7pm. The event was attended by 150 people and some very positive feedback was received; KMTV were also in attendance and interviewed the Leader which aired on Kent Tonight.

The team would now look at additional opportunities to help residents continue their own climate change journey that would help address the cost of living crisis, reducing energy costs and food waste.

In response to a Members question concerning youth involvement, the Assistant Director (Transformation and IT) explained that an event was being hosted in November with the Youth Council and a number of guest speakers; Council officers would also attend to discuss the climate change delivery plan.

The Committee praised the report and the work of officers to achieve such positive feedback.

Members noted the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 20:25pm.