

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 26 September 2024  
6.00 - 8.05 pm

**Present:** Councillors Pounds (Chair), Nestor (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Divkovic, Glasberg, Hauk, Payne and Swift

Executive Councillors: Holloway (Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing) and Moore (Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment)

**Officers:**

Assistant Chief Executive: Andrew Limb  
Director, Communities Group: Sam Scharf  
Environmental Quality & Growth Manager: Jo Dicks  
Climate Change Officer: Janet Fogg  
Scientific Officer: Elizabeth Bruce  
Committee Manager: James Goddard  
Meeting Producer: Claire Tunncliffe

**Others Present:**

Air Quality Consultant: Dr Claire Beattie  
Climate Change Officer: Danette O'Hara  
Logika Group: David Birchby

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**24/39/EnC Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Divkovic and Payne who would arrive after the start of the meeting (they arrived by the start of the public questions item).

**24/40/EnC Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**24/41/EnC Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Ashton referred to 24/31/EnC Record of Urgent Decision taken by the Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment regarding the Material Recycling Facility (MRF) Contract 2024. He asked for details as he understood the MRF was going to Northern Ireland although the contract was controlled by South Cambs District Council.

The Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment responded:

- i. The MRF contract was due for renewal.
- ii. The City Council worked in partnership with ReCap and Cambridgeshire Authorities to look at a new provider for all partners. The tender received for all partners was three times the current cost so parties were advised to break into smaller groups to get a cheaper tender.
- iii. The City Council did have a say in where recycling materials went, but the County Council ran the procurement process as the waste disposal authority and did not choose the Waterbeach site.
- iv. Officers looked at a new location for the MRF and chose the Northern Ireland site.
- v. Waterbeach merely sorted waste then sent it offsite for recycling (it did not recycle on-site), so moving the MRF to Northern Ireland was not such a large change.
- vi. The City Council and South Cambs District Council would continue using Waterbeach for six months then move to the Northern Ireland facility. The new contract would last five years.

Councillor Pounds said she had received a recent briefing from Officers covering amongst other topics:

1. The Happy Bee scheme.
2. A report on the impact of the Herbicide Free Policy impact, specifically progress of the use of the new machines for clearing pavements and kerbsides instead of using herbicides.

Councillor Pounds offered to circulate details to Committee Members.

## **24/42/EnC Public Questions**

A list of public questions was publishing on the meeting page available via: [Agenda for Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 26th September, 2024, 6.00 pm - Cambridge Council](#)

Responses to public questions and supplementary questions were included below:

### Question 1: Barney McCullagh

The planned relocation of the Grafton Centre's Ping Pong Parlour to the Malle's unit 55 creates more problems than it solves. The new premises are scarcely big enough to accommodate two tables. The mammoth interior square pillars that are characteristic of the Centre, puts internal space at a premium. By contrast, the current premises are big enough to accommodate ten tables. The parlour has in this sense become a victim of its own success. With tables freely available, the popularity of the parlour has grown exponentially, so much so that the facility has long since become a 'de facto' community centre where English, Chinese, and Central Europeans (to name but a few) congregate to play, talk, and socialise. Whilst the beneficiaries of this initiative are grateful to Table Tennis England and the Grafton Centre for their original investment, there is now much uncertainty surrounding the venue's new 2-table operation. Will a booking system be introduced? Will would-be players form queues outside with no guarantee of gaining access to a table? Clearly a 2-table venue will be unworkable in the long run. This is where the Council could make a difference. Could it not dedicate a premises in central Cambridge to the provision of free Table Tennis for all? Ideally the site should be inalienable and devoted in perpetuity to the practice of the sport both by the townspeople and those living in South Cambridgeshire.

In essence we fear that the relocation of the Table Tennis parlour will be the thin end of a wedge that will lead to the extinction of our burgeoning 'community'. There is a further issue to be considered. I am one of many Parkinson's sufferers throughout the world whose symptoms have been alleviated by playing Table Tennis. So strong is the link between the sport and Parkinson's that there have already been four Ping Pong Parkinson's World Championships with a fifth scheduled to take place in France this October. Thus, investing in a 10-table centre will show that Britain, and Cambridge in particular, are active in, and committed to, a movement towards health through sport and self-help. Indeed the disencumbering of the NHS from part of its responsibility for the treatment of Parkinson's coupled with the individual

sufferer's assumption of responsibility for his or her own physical health can only be a good thing. This empowerment of the individual only requires a one-off initial investment to be effective. We therefore urge Cambridge City Council, either in tandem with Ping Pong England or on its own initiative, to acquire, equip and maintain a 10- or 12- table Ping Pong facility for the use of those living in Cambridge and its environs.

The Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing responded:

- i. The Agreement for provision of the "Ping Parlour" was a direct arrangement between Table Tennis England and the Grafton Centre management, not the City Council. The City Council just helped to facilitate sessions in there.
- ii. Believed the ping pong parlour would be moved to another unit in the Grafton Centre by Decathlon but was unsure of dates and the size of the new facility.
- iii. The City Council did not own either facility or fund the centre, so there was not a lot the Council could do other than work with Table Tennis England to look for other sites. Officers intended to meet Table Tennis England one week after committee.
- iv. Offered to talk to the questioner after committee to address any issues.

#### Question 2a: Minjie Ding

I am resident in Cambridge. Night parties/Night noise become a big issue in Cambridge. However, Council's current organisation cannot deal with the noise complaint efficiently or sufficiently. Following are the news about night noise.

1.1 BBC news on 21 Sept, police called to 'house party goes wrong' at Cambridge, The ambulance was called, which caused extra work to NHS.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8dj9rn2m93o>

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambs-party-leaves-local-residents-24517511>

1.2 the Guardian news in 2021 Noisy neighbours spark 67% rise in police complaints, the complaints tripled in Cambridgeshire.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/19/noisy-neighbours-spark-67-rise-in-police-complaints>

Council doesn't have night team to deal with noise nuisance immediately, which made vulnerable people suffering from mental disorder, and the further useless complaint procedure and officer's inaction, cause extra burden to NHS. Although victims can take legal proceeding against noise nuisance, Council doesn't help victims to get the noise makers' name, which made the legal proceeding impossible. Any plan for council to solve this problem?

Other council's solution:

I did research on 294 local authorities. (36 metropolitan districts, 32 London boroughs, 62 Unitary authorities and 164 district council in England.) There are 70 councils have the night team to deal with night noise nuisance immediately. I don't know why Cambridge City council cannot deal with it? Funding cut is not an excuse.

Let's take Bristol as an Example. Bristol university, council, police were worked together to manage the night parties. Police will attend the night party and fine them. This will lead the party animals to have parties in the club and pub. They will spend money there, which will revitalise the economy. At the same time, police can have some income instead of asking the parliament to give them more funding. Working class, vulnerable people can have a good sleep, in which the working class can work more harder, earn more money, pay more tax to the government. The vulnerable people don't need to see doctor for anxiety, heart disease etc. As night party can trigger lots of mental disorder. having a night team, leading people to club, can release burden for NHS.

The Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment responded:

- i. Referred to details in earlier communication with the public speaker.
- ii. There was not an out of hours Environmental Health Officer employed by the City Council, the vacancy could not be filled. As an alternative, a

noise app and recording equipment could be loaned to residents to record noise and use the recording in court to prove issues.

- iii. The City Council would take noise enforcement action where applicable; some issues were the responsibility of the Police.

Supplementary question:

Minjie Ding sought clarification on actions to take in a neighbour dispute.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. Was sorry to hear Minjie Ding found the Anti-Social Behaviour Team was unable to help her
- ii. The noise app was used to undertake similar enforcement action (provide evidence) as an on-call officer could.

Question 2b Minjie Ding

Cambridge City Council plan to merge with Peterborough council and also another partnership, I would like to know the progress of that. And for the new organisation, is there any plan to solve the bureaucracy (local authorities inaction)? If we don't address this problem, no matter how much tax the working class will pay, we'll never solve the financial mismanagement problem.

The Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment responded:

- i. The City Council had no plans to merge with Peterborough City Council.
- ii. However, Cambridge City Council had just completed initial public engagement about the future of local government for Cambridge. More information about the 'Future of Local Government for Cambridge' was available on the Council's website.
- iii. The results of the engagement would be published in due course.
- iv. Cambridge City Council, Peterborough City Council and other Cambridgeshire Councils were part of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority to improve the region's economy and opportunities for local people.
- v. Cambridge City Council had little tax collecting powers, these were set by national government.

Supplementary question:

Minjie Ding sought clarification on why council tax was rising when the City Council was undertaking the same amount of work.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. Council tax was increasing but the City Council was doing more work.
- ii. Offered to talk to Minjie Ding after committee as her Ward Councillor to address any issues.

## **24/43/EnC Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan Annual Report 2023/24**

### **Matter for Decision**

The Officer's report provided an update on progress on the 2023/24 actions of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2021-26. As part of this, the report included an update on progress in implementing projects to reduce direct carbon emissions from corporate buildings, fleet vehicles and business travel as detailed in the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2021-26.

The report also provided an update on the Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions for 2023/24 and a new Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CR&VA) and Adaptation Plan, which prioritised the climate change risks for the Council and the city, plus details on actions the Council was taking to adapt and improve resilience.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment**

- i. Noted the progress achieved in implementing the actions in the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan (Appendix B of the Officer's report).
- ii. Approved the updated Climate Change Strategy Action Plan presented in Appendix A.
- iii. Noted the risks identified and actions being taken in the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CR&VA) and Adaptation Plan.

### **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

The Assistant Chief Executive said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Undertook to provide briefing details to Committee Members after the meeting on:
  - a. Civic Quarter project and biodiversity net gain.
  - b. Community Action Days.
  - c. Green investments from General Fund.
  - d. Support for businesses to tackle climate change.
  - e. Procurement and Climate Change.
  - f. Carbon Neutral Cambridge's commentary on the Climate Change Strategy annual update report.
- ii. Targets referenced in the Officer's report were direct emissions from the City Council. The hope was to get the city to net zero, but this was an aspiration.
- iii. The Council was taking a wide range of direct actions, set out in the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan. For example seeking to reduce emissions from its housing and leisure sites. Officers were looking at how to take more actions in future.
- iv. The Guildhall was used for a number of purposes by different organisations. There were currently no plans to host a Decarbonisation Officer in the Guildhall. Other officers could be signposted to people making enquiries.
- v. The City Council was putting in electric vehicle charging points in car parks on land it owned. The Environmental Quality & Growth Manager was liaising with the County Council to encourage people to put charging points on home owners' properties in residential areas.

The Environmental Quality & Growth Manager said:

- a. A pilot project was run with Cambridgeshire County Council to install forty-two charging points in residential areas. A larger project was expected to be rolled out in the next twelve months, led by the



- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, to install more charging points around the county (not just in the city).
- b. The City Council had installed rapid chargers around Cambridge for taxi and public use.
  - c. The on-street charging tariff could be expensive. It was cheaper to use private charging points. The tariff for public ones included maintenance costs. The contract for residential on-street chargers was managed by the County Council. Rates across the city were competitive with national ones.
- vi. A social value framework was currently being developed. This looked at how City Council money could be used to nudge contractors to take more action. The Director of Communities was writing a new strategy to take over from the existing one in eighteen months.
- vii. Referenced objective 4 in the report. The City Council convened the City Leaders Climate Change Group to share good practice plus encourage residents and businesses to reduce emissions.
- viii. It was difficult to engage with some residents if they did not want to respond.
- ix. The City Council was working with partners to decarbonise the food supply chain, working with partners such as Cambridge Sustainable Food.

The Director of Communities said officers were looking at how to use community venues as food hubs. Actions could be reported back in future such as work with Coe Farm.

- x. The Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network (WREN) solar project was scheduled to start construction in 2025.

The Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment said the Council had taken delivery of a fourth electric vehicle for waste collection. More could not be procured until WREN came online. Some waste oil powered vehicles were used mean time.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

### **Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

### **Comment by Committee**

The Committee thanked Assistant Chief Executive Andrew Limb for his exceptional work in supporting Cambridge City Council's climate change strategy.

### **24/44/EnC Consultation on the Expansion of the Smoke Control Area (SCA)**

#### **Matter for Decision**

Solid Fuel Burning was the largest single source of PM2.5 emissions in Cambridge. It accounted for 40% of emissions in Cambridge.

Legislation to control emissions from solid fuel burning was the Clean Air Act 1993 and the use of Smoke Control Areas (SCA); a designated area where the emission of smoke was not permitted. You could burn inside a SCA, but either smokeless fuel or a DEFRA approved appliance must be used. Three SCAs were introduced in Cambridge in the 1960s and 1970s. Most residential properties were outside existing SCAs.

Cambridge City Council commissioned an independent report to assess the effects of amending the SCA in Cambridge to cover the whole of the city. The report considered both the inclusion and exclusion of permanent moored vessels in terms of changes in pollution emissions, health & socio-economic impacts.

The report concluded that any changes to widen the scope of the SCA would provide a net benefit to society from health improvements due to reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, with these benefits outweighing the combined costs. Costs included cost to home and vessel owners of switching fuel or upgrading stoves; and cost to council for implementation and enforcement.

The impact on individuals was considered as part of the socio-economic study. Very few residents were solely dependent on solid fuel for heating and hot water, with changes impacting those that used wood burning stoves for pleasure or to subsidise other forms of central heating. However, this was not the case for moored vessel owners who were more dependent on solid fuel. Evidence suggested this group may have lower incomes and be more vulnerable.

The Officer's report recommended the expansion of the SCA to cover the whole city including moored vessels, and recommended further engagement with vessel owners given the increased potential vulnerability of this group. Should changes to the SCA be implemented, it should be accompanied by a robust awareness raising campaign.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment**

Approved the consultation to the public on expanding the SCA to cover the whole of the district including to extend the scope of the SCA to include permanent moored vessels.

### **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

See Officer's report.

### **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Committee received a report from the Environmental Quality & Growth Manager.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Referred to the 2023 report regarding how enforcement action could be undertaken. The intention would be to investigate complaints from members of the public, issue warnings if required, then act if people did not desist from burning inappropriate fuels etc. There had been no prosecutions under the SCAs in twenty-seven years.
- ii. Residents in some wards complained when others burnt solid fuel as they were concerned about harm from smoke.

The Environmental Quality & Growth Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Officer's report recommended the expansion of the SCA to cover the whole city including moored vessels, and recommended further engagement/consultation with vessel owners given the increased potential vulnerability of this group.
- ii. People could still burn approved fuels or any fuel in an approved appliance.
- iii. Retailers could only supply smokeless fuels. 'Approved' stoves were available and more expensive than 'standard' stoves. The report set out options the City Council could implement to avoid penalising boat owners.

The Air Quality Consultant said the difference between 'standard' and 'approved' stoves was hard to quantify. Possibly a reduction in up to 70% of some particulates. Undertook to liaise with Councillor Glasberg after committee.

- iv. There would always be some harm from burning combustible fuels, so reducing emissions would lead to some benefits.

The Scientific Officer reiterated:

- i. Officers had plans to engage with residents and raise awareness of issues if SCA were expanded.
- ii. People could use appropriate fuel/stoves.
- iii. There was a need to improve fuel issues such as traffic emissions to improve air quality.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

### **Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)**

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

**CHAIR**

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