

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
19 MARCH 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote meeting on Wednesday, 19 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson (Chair)

Councillors: Gillian Brockley, Steve Copple, Chrissy Gee, Ian Hodge, Roz Mansell, Allan Marshall, Carolyn Preece, Dan Rose, Jason Shallcross and Sam Swash

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor: Hilary McGuill (for Mared Eastwood)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Dave Healey (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy) and Programme Manager for Climate Change and Carbon Reduction

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Linda Thomas attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Climate Change Project Officer and Manager of the Regional Emergency Planning Service

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

44. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Gillian Brockley and Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

45. CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR EXTREME HEAT

A presentation was given by Helen Kilgannon, Manager of the Regional Emergency Planning Service, covering the following:

- Why we have Emergency Planning
- Other Legislation
- Emergency and Major Incident
- What can cause emergencies?

- What is the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service?
- Emergency Planning Structure in Flintshire County Council
- Recent emergencies in Flintshire and North Wales
- Recent regional activity
- Local Resilience Forum structure
- Covid Response
- Debriefing
- Main risks in North Wales
- Climate Change
- Elected Members E-learning

When asked by Councillor Hilary McGuill about public engagement, the Regional Manager advised that plans were in place to ensure that information was shared and updated by the Council's information team and multi-agency group, depending on the situation. She also referred to the emergency alert system piloted by Welsh Government which remained under development.

Councillor Chrissy Gee enquired about assistance with a flood plan for the Broughton area. The Regional Manager agreed to forward relevant contact details within her team along with those of Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru. On a further query, the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) confirmed that the Waterco flood investigation was ongoing and that the outcome would be shared with the Community Council and local Members on receipt.

Following comments by Councillor Roz Mansell on the importance of repairing potholes and clearing drains as flood prevention measures, Councillor Dave Hughes agreed to meet with her to discuss further. The Chief Officer also responded to comments from Councillors Jason Shallcross and Gillian Brockley on flooding issues.

Councillor Steve Cople asked about work with industrial areas to prevent catastrophic events. The Regional Manager gave examples of engaging with organisations on their internal safety plans and would seek a response from the Statutory Duties Officer on the approach to reducing the risk of gas releases.

In response to remarks by Councillor Allan Marshall, the Regional Manager made reference to the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Protocol which detailed the approach to multi-agency working on the scene of an emergency.

The Chair queried the emergency response to a heatwave and was told about the role of the Local Resilience Forum in reviewing risks, in addition to work with Public Health Wales to share information and the role of Social Care teams in identifying support for vulnerable people. He also suggested the potential development of 'cool hubs' to respond to extreme heat, should funding become available.

Acceptance of the presentation was moved and seconded by the Chair and Councillor Brockley.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the information on contingency planning for extreme heat with North Wales Councils' Regional Emergency Planning Service.

46. AUDIT WALES ASSURANCE AND RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT - CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) presented a report on the outcome of the Audit Wales report on the Council's carbon commitment and actions against the findings of their public sector wide report. The report had been considered by Cabinet and the Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

During discussion, Councillor Allan Marshall said that legislation from Welsh Government should be supported by the relevant funding.

In acknowledging the recommendation by Audit Wales, Councillor Steve Cople asked whether the lack of funding posed a risk to the Council's ambitions and said that achievable small wins were a way forward given the current financial constraints.

The Chief Officer said that the Council would review the strategy and its ambitions within the next 18 months and that there would be an opportunity for involvement by the Committee. He went on to refer to the potential to utilise Salix schemes (as had been done in previous years) to contribute to energy efficiency savings in addition to carbon reduction projects built into the Capital Programme.

The Chair suggested that officers from the Capital Finance team could be invited to a future meeting to discuss the options available to deliver the Council's objectives. The Chief Officer suggested that the item could incorporate positive examples of how projects in previous years had been funded.

In response to comments from Councillor Hilary McGuill on the need for more carbon neutral new developments, the Chief Officer advised that whilst this was predominantly under Building Control, arrangements would be made for Planning Committee training. The Chair referred to discussion on this subject at the Committee's meeting in July 2023.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Ian Hodge and Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the outcome of the Audit Wales report and supports action being taken to address its recommendation.

47. COMMERCIAL CARBON OFFSETS

The Climate Change Project Officer presented a report which set out the purpose and use of commercial carbon offsetting in order to achieve the Net Zero Carbon target by 2030. He provided an overview of the key points including the relevant standards to be met, examples of their use, the benefits and drawbacks.

In response to questions from Councillor Dan Rose, the Project Officer provided clarification on the recommended approach for community groups with access to land. He agreed to seek more clarity on opportunities to prioritise finances on non-profit carbon credits and the expected process for purchasing offsets.

On carbon sequestration, Councillor Allan Marshall spoke about the need to encourage landowners to manage hedgerows more effectively to allow for growth. The Project Officer would look into whether this formed part of the Sustainable Farming Scheme and any associated incentives.

Following comments by Councillor Hilary McGuill, the Project Officer agreed to look into the carbon offset project developed by Compact Syngas Solutions in Deeside and whether the Council could offer support.

The Chair voiced his concerns about carbon offsetting which had instigated the report being shared with the Committee.

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Dan Rose and Allan Marshall.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council should not purchase carbon removal offsets while carbon reduction and sequestration opportunities exist, irrespective of the 2030 net zero carbon target; and
- (b) Only when all carbon reduction opportunities have been exhausted, or are not viable, should the Council consider the purchase of removal offsets to become net zero carbon. In such a case, the Council should prioritise offset projects that are local and meet robust standards/backed by UK Government.

48. INQUIRIES UPDATE

The Chair advised that dates previously arranged for February would be rescheduled and Members advised accordingly.

49. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

In considering the current forward work programme, it was agreed that an officer from the Capital Finance team would be invited to a future meeting to discuss financial options to support climate related projects.

On that basis, the recommendation was moved and seconded by the Chair and Councillor Dan Rose.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme, as amended, be accepted.

50. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the public present.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.35am)

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Chair