

Climate Advisory Panel

Virtual meeting - 16 June 2020 (2.30pm – 4.30pm)

Present: Charlie Seward (Chairman), Councillor Matt Bryan, Will Pearson, Alison Amesbury, David Butler, Rob Charnley, Gill Smith, Mark Thompson, Gary Shields, Myles Kitcher, Colin Watson, Ali Dore, Simon Dowell, Ashley Rogers, Steve Hughes, Rebecca Collins, Georgina Patel, Dave Brown, Clare Olver, Andy Hulme, Charlie Steer, Jennifer Kelly, Marc Watterson, Sophie Long, James Latham

Apologies: Andrew Lewis, Sean Traynor, Nick Brelsford, Renia Kotynia, Ged Barlow, Phil McCabe, Mike Garner, Rob Pickering

1 Welcome and terms of reference

The Chairman welcomed colleagues to the Advisory Panel which is focusing on Housing and Land Use.

2 Minutes

Will Pearson highlighted key matters arising from the minutes. As well as being able to suggest 'pop up' measures to promote active travel via email, the [Walk.Ride.Thrive](#) consultation is now active, and allows people to drop suggestions onto a map. 357 suggestions have been posted so far.

The LEP are undertaking a Natural Capital Audit and Investment Plan audit.

HiNEt will be presenting to the next meetings of the panel and taskforce in July.

The solar on schools project discussed at the last meeting is now going through internal officer governance, with the next step being the Climate Programme Board on 8 July.

3 Embedding the Climate Emergency into local planning policy

The Advisory Panel received a presentation from Jennifer Kelly and Marc Watterson from Arups.

Jennifer Kelly introduced the advisory presentation on Arup's experience of embedding climate emergency in planning policy, with a focus on the review of the local plan and the potential interventions that could be made through planning, land use and building control

The regional and local context shows local authorities playing a key role in delivering national targets, with ambitious targets for net zero or carbon neutrality set across the North West.

Marc Watterson then set out the legislative picture, with the Government's 'Planning for the Future' policy paper requiring updated local plans by Dec 2023.

Whilst a formal white paper is awaited, intentions are for a future homes standard which will require major carbon emission reductions in all new homes. He also highlighted National Planning Practice Guidance, with climate change being a core consideration that should underpin local plans - they must include policies to tackle climate change and its impacts

He outlined a range of policy examples and best practice around carbon offsetting, renewable energy and sustainable building design. Achieving is not just about having policy in place, but embedding approaches from the start of work with developers.

Marc then reflected on the key importance of stakeholders and engagement and listening throughout the planned development approach. Commenting on Camden's Citizen Assembly and Cheshire West and Chester's Climate Emergency Conference he also highlighted the positive foundation of the broad membership of the Advisory Panel.

Jennifer highlighted a number of key considerations:

- Balance – lots of legislative contexts and policy agendas.
- Viability - short term savings can be very expensive long term.
- Delivery - being clear on responsibility and equity of the cost burden.
- Evidence - needs to be able to stand up to scrutiny.
- Embedding – need clear individual policy areas.
- Engagement and buy-in – codesign can result in the most effective policies.

She then reflected on recent successful legal challenges of development on environmental grounds – with groups testing a series of legal approaches to challenging plans. Following on from Heathrow there is now an appeal against RIS2 (road investment strategy). Whilst the focus is on national policy statements Client Earth have put local authorities on notice of legal action. Authorities need to demonstrate where climate change has been considered – invest up front in a detailed review of the climate impacts of plans and proposals and build mitigation into planning regimes.

The panel were left with some key reflections:

- Local planning is really important but has limitations.
- Recognise wider opportunities (get people involved).
- Set a direction for change (set targets then really understand potential interventions – scale and pace. People want to be able to see the implementation of this ambition).
- Implementation and delivery (groups, delivery leads, nuts and bolts).
- Building buy in and collaboration (not about individuals or single organisations, need groups of stakeholders and collaborative action. Involve citizens.

Discussion:

Councillor Bryan asked about the revisions Cheshire West and Chester Council should make to the Local Plan and was advised to be bold. Policy needs to be robust and allow you to defend yourself when developers try to push on the exceptions. Push standards one step higher than you ever have before and don't give in to developers moaning about cost. Carbon intensive development that need future retrofitting will be problematic, with limited recourse to developers once its been built. It was also suggested that where authorities don't have the power to take the action you want, feed that back in to the Government consultation.

Welcoming the presentation, Colin Watson asked whether, given the review of climate change and its impact on policy, an intermediate document could be presented in parallel. Jennifer highlighted the need for a sedimentary process of building action over time, with obvious short term interventions put in place whilst longer term interventions are developed.

Councillor Beacham asked for examples of other authorities who have undertaken a good review of their local plan. Marc singposted the examples within the presentations but also that the Cheshire West and Chester's adopted policy is already strong with opportunities to strengthen it through supplementary planning documents.

Mark Thompson asked about work that had been undertaken to move community understanding towards what may currently be seen as unpalatable. Jennifer offered to look at this further but highlighted current examples of work with coastal communities who are having to understand that at some point their communities will no longer be protected.

4 Building control

Gary Shields set out the context of building regulations and building control, with its focus on

- health, safety and well-being
- sustainable use of fuel and power
- access and facilities for disabled people

He set out the approved document which set out the regulations and the current criteria for meeting those – around carbon emissions, fabric performance, passive control, quality construction and provision for operation – with building control assessing progress at design, construction and completion phases. Throughout the focus is on promoting compliance with enforcement as a last option.

There will be a new Homes Standard from 2025 that is expected to require 75-80% less carbon emissions per dwelling than currently. The Government are consulting on further proposals at the moment including whether to focus on emissions or

energy use and whether to restrict local planning authorities from setting stricter requirements through local policy.

A key issue with setting requirements above standard building regulation levels is enforcing it. Around half of building control checks in the borough are not undertaken by the Council's building control team but by external bodies who would focus on national guidance and may not be aware of local requirements

Gary posed three questions to the group:

- Is local planning policy or national building regulation the most effective vehicle for driving higher standards?
- If local policy is chosen how do we seal the gaps between legislation?
- If a developer had a choice of where to build, would a more demanding local policy influence their decision?

Discussion:

Councillor Bryan asked for the local view on the Passive Haus standard and was told that the more demanding measures are, the better, but that this is a decision for Government following consultation.

Georgina Patel asked if the current consultation is aligned to the code for sustainable homes and Gary Shields agreed to check.

Councillor Bryan asked if we are meeting our statutory obligations to process applications can we prioritise those applications that meet higher standards to be processed more quickly? This was seen as a planning rather than building control question and Rob Charnley was asked to consider this pending the discussion item at the end of the meeting.

5 ForHousing response to the climate emergency

James Latham presented on the art of the possible on reducing the carbon footprint of our homes, setting out proposals for a reduction of 14,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions from the housing stock they manage on behalf of the Council (a 71 per cent reduction).

Proposals included increasing minimum SAP rating to C, reducing water use (and so water heating), solar PV and battery storage and ground source heat pump district heating. Further savings (of around 25 per cent) could be sought on capital investment delivery processes whilst responsive repair delivery is seen as having little scope.

Newbuild properties present strong opportunities for improvement, with modern construction methods (eg. offsite) predicted to provide a 34 per cent reduction in

emissions for a 30 per cent increase in costs. Low and zero carbon solutions can be pursued relatively efficiently for around £10k extra per dwelling.

Discussions:

Georgina Patel highlighted that the greatest challenge that we face is in reducing emissions from private sector properties.

The date for the next Advisory Panel meeting is 10 July 2020 and will focus on carbon offsetting, carbon capture and climate repair.