

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 22ND NOVEMBER 2023 – 7.00 p.m.

Minutes of an **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 22ND NOVEMBER 2023** at **7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Neville Jones, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public.

92. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Neil Collinson, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Joanne Jones, Ken Robson and Michael Stead.

94. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There had been no requests for dispensations under disclosable or non-disclosable interests.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

96. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A suggestion was made by a member of the public regarding recycling used crisp packets and polythene covers from clothing stores to make blankets for rough sleepers and homeless.

Councillor Eddy Adam supported this suggestion and added that Junction 7 and Rotary Newton Aycliffe are collecting coats for donations.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran added that the Great Aycliffe Tidy Team regularly collect crisp packets to be recycled as well.

97. CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROGRESS UPDATE

The Town Clerk submitted a report to update Members in relation to progress in making the Town Council carbon neutral within an ambitious timeframe and requesting that Members advise officers of any specific further actions they wish to see taken in relation to the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.

He added that whilst much positive progress had been made in recent years, the Council may benefit from an overarching policy and action plan to provide structure to the process.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked officers for the report and the good work which has been done, including building their knowledge and expertise with the qualifications undertaken. He added that there needs to be a policy in place and a baseline target to be set via a carbon footprint calculation so that progress can be measured.

The Chairman agreed a baseline is needed.

Councillor Jed Hillary requested that future climate change updates go onto the Full Council Agenda and that there is no need for an Extraordinary Meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that climate change will be included as a standard item within every committee report going forward.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran circulated a Statement of Policy on Carbon Reduction and Carbon Net Zero (General and Specific) for Members' consideration as follows:-

'The Council reiterates that it is the Council's wish to aim to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 and Carbon Zero by 2050. However financial, operational and practical constraints will dictate the pace and level of attainment (within legal requirements).

The Officers of the Council are given a free hand by the Council in seeking to manage and achieve that Objective, subject to the normal protocols and practices around decisions, budgetary constraints and applying common sense.

To this end the officers will continue to include a rolling item heading in all future Council and Committee Reports entitled "Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications" to ensure that climate change is considered and included as a key consideration in any report coming before the Council for a decision.

Sometimes there will be nothing to report, other times there may well be, either way, it enables Councillors to ask questions and put ideas forward at regular intervals as a way of not taking our eyes off the ball. We can see tangibly if we are making progress.

The Council is not in the game of ticking boxes, progress must be realistic, practical and financially viable. Necessity and value for money are the key considerations.

It is recognised that in the development of a Climate Change Policy, Carbon Reduction Plan and calculation of a carbon footprint, consideration will need to be given to the potential impact on existing staffing capacity. We will not be employing more staff to undertake this work.

Hence the delegation to the Town Clerk and the Corporate Management Team to lead as to the best way forward all around. Councillors will no doubt from time-to-time question, suggest and have input, but the Council Corporate Management Team will have responsibility to achieve those objectives and advise and direct the Council as to the most cost-efficient way, providing value for money and practicality.

The Town Clerk will, in conjunction with his Officers, submit half yearly progress updates to the Council on the Climate Emergency and, when staffing capacity allows, draw up and maintain a Climate Change Policy and Carbon Reduction Plan, which is live and ongoing, subject to scrutiny and open to ideas, and subject to practical common sense and fiscal reality in order to seek to achieve this end.

This statement was agreed and it was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam that:-

- a) The Council receives the Report.
- b) Officers are instructed to prepare a Carbon Footprint Calculation for the Council to encapsulate Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions (direct and indirect) only, which will provide a baseline for recording future progress in realising the Council's aim of being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.
- c) Climate change and carbon reduction implications are included in every report to the Council and its committees, sub-committees and working groups under the "*Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications*" section of the report, in order to ensure that climate change is a key consideration in any decision coming before the Council.
- d) The feasibility studies into EV charging points and solar panels be completed and reported to Council by 31st March 2024.
- e) Officers begin the process of developing a Climate Emergency Policy and Carbon Reduction Action Plan with a view to reporting these to Council and having these agreed and in place by 31st March 2025, subject to staffing capacity and other priorities.
- f) The MTFP Capital Programme Budgets and Asset Management Plan continue to be updated with the cost of low carbon alternatives for all building works and replacement vehicles and machinery and ensure that sufficient financial provision is made for any additional costs.
- g) Awareness raising and training where relevant, is rolled out to Council staff in all service areas in order to highlight the importance of reducing carbon emissions.
- h) Twice yearly progress reports on climate change and carbon reduction are reported to Council moving forward'.

Councillor John Moore further proposed that officers contact Durham County Council energy management team or their heating design section for advice on fitting council building heating systems with an 'optimiser' which alters the 'switch on' time to match the prevailing weather conditions.

This was seconded by Councillor Andy Hill.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the report be received;
- ii) That officers are instructed to prepare a Carbon Footprint Calculation for the Council to encapsulate Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions (direct and indirect) only, which will provide a baseline for recording future progress in realising the Council's aim of being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon zero by 2050.
- iii) That climate change and carbon reduction implications are included in every report to the Council and its committees, sub-committees and working groups under the "Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications" section of the report, in order to ensure that climate change is a key consideration in any decision coming before the Council.
- iv) That the feasibility studies into EV charging points and solar panels be completed and reported to Council by 31st March 2024.
- v) That officers begin the process of developing a Climate Emergency Policy and Carbon Reduction Action Plan with a view to reporting these to Council and having these agreed and in place by 31st March 2025, subject to staffing capacity and other priorities.
- vi) That the MTFP Capital Programme Budgets and Asset Management Plan continue to be updated with the cost of low carbon alternatives for all building works and replacement vehicles and machinery and ensure that sufficient financial provision is made for any additional costs.
- vii) That awareness raising and training where relevant, is rolled out to Council staff in all service areas in order to highlight the importance of reducing carbon emissions.
- viii) That twice yearly progress reports on climate change and carbon reduction are reported to Council moving forward.
- ix) Officers contact Durham County Council for advice on fitting council building heating systems with an 'optimiser' which alters the 'switch on' time to match the prevailing weather conditions.

CHAIRMAN.