

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 11 March 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

H Hellier (Vice-Chair)

I Ashraf, K Khan, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, J Millar-Smith, S Piggott, S Raja and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors I T Irvine, A Nawaz and B Noyce

Officers Present:

Helen Davies	Housing Options Manager
Ian Duke	Chief Executive
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Carolin Martlew	Head of Corporate Finance
Diana Maughan	Head of Strategic Housing
Philip Morris	Sustainability Manager
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor A Pendlington

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R A Lanzer	Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 29 January 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Second Home Council Tax Premium

The Commission considered report [FIN/648](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act came into force on 26 October 2023. The Act allowed Councils to charge higher Council Tax on properties that were defined as long term empty homes and properties that are only occupied occasionally (second homes).

During the discussion with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Head of Corporate Finance, the following comments were made:

- It was noted that the report recommended the introduction of Council Tax premiums on long term empty properties and on second homes. The wider aim was to reduce the number of empty homes and to encourage the use of properties as main residences rather than as second homes in the borough. It was therefore proposed to introduce a 100% premium on empty homes after 1 year instead of 2 years and to also introduce a second homes premium of 100% both with effect from 1 April 2025.
- Acknowledgement that the additional charge was intended to encourage owners to bring properties back into use and could boost the supply of properties in the borough.
- It was commented that given the housing emergency declaration in February 2024, together with the Council's financial pressures the report was welcomed in an attempt to meet both objectives.
- Clarification was sought and obtained regarding the penalties that would exist for any potentially fraudulent claims. It was recognised that the Council had a variety of information available to assist in fraud prevention and undertook visits to confirm the information held against properties, together with credit searches and further involvement from the Council's Fraud Investigation Team where required.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet

5. Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

The Commission received an update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change, the Head of Economy and Planning and the Sustainability Officer. It had been agreed that following the completion of the Climate Change Scrutiny Panel, and the previous Climate Emergency Action Plan Update, that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission would receive regular updates on the Climate Emergency Action Plan. (Presentation attached as Appendix A to the minutes).

The following main points were noted during the discussion:

- Acknowledgement that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and following this and the subsequent Climate Change Scrutiny Panel, the formal Climate Emergency Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet in November 2021.
- Recognition that there were many significant pathways to achieving net zero and local authorities were only responsible for a small percentage of direct emissions, and yet influence was required in other areas to achieve specific targets.
- Details were provided as to the implementation of the action plan and the challenges faced. These included ensuring the monitoring systems and decision making tools were embedded throughout the Council, together with the introduction of carbon emissions training. It was added that the main current challenge was identification of sources of funding. Whilst significant progress had been made, there was an urgent need to remain committed to delivery task prioritisation.
- It was noted that the Council's climate commitment included scope 3 emissions (from procured goods and services) and this was the biggest risk to achieving climate commitments. The highest direct emission percentage derived from K2 Crawley, followed by other Council assets. In order to complete heat decarbonisation further information and clarity would be required on capital investment and various government funding streams as it was acknowledged that retrofitting various sites was costly. It was noted however, that the new town hall building was extremely efficient and being supplied by the DHN which made this a significant opportunity for the town and would assist in attracting clients to the town hall.
- The action plan would be refreshed to focus on delivery, trends of decarbonisation and also link to service plans. It would also identify dependencies outside the Council's control. The action plan would be brought forward to OSC and Cabinet via a report in the autumn.
- Acknowledgement that procurement played a key role in reducing carbon dioxide emissions through the supply chain, which included construction projects, manufacturing of goods and services. It was important to work with partners to reduce carbon emission throughout the supply chain and the Procurement charter was being updated to include decarbonisation in decision making.
- It was noted that there had been an implementation delay with regards to waste and green infrastructure. It was hoped that the changes to be implemented as a result of the National Waste Strategy would increase recycling and reduce waste. Recognition that currently the lack of grid capacity and funding streams proved challenging in procuring new (electric) fleet vehicles and as a result alternative fuel sources were being investigated such as HVO.
- Clarity obtained that there were several actions relating to Crawley Homes, in particular retrofitting various properties. Carbon emissions from individual properties were not considered direct emissions from the Council, but did contribute to borough-wide emissions.
- Further information was provided on sequestration of carbon. There was a need to investigate decarbonisation first prior to successful sequestration and offsetting and further options were being explored.
- Recognition that there was a need to encourage and influence behaviour change and the Council should be leading on this. Regular communications on climate and home heating were already taking place, but a strategy for communications and engagement was important to align channels and messaging to influence staff, as well as externally with residents and stakeholders. It was felt the joint working with partners and other councils would assist this further. Furthermore, there may be a link with the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel and communications to residents.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted, with the views and actions expressed being acknowledged and documented by the officers.

6. Homelessness Update

The Commission considered report [CEX/067](#) of the Chief Executive. As a result of the costs being attributed to housing and in particular temporary accommodation, at the meeting on 29 January 2024 the Commission felt that it would be beneficial to receive a detailed report on the rising costs and data attributing to these factors.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Chief Executive, the Commission raised a number of queries. The issues raised and key responses included:

- Homelessness was one of the biggest issues facing the Council and the report was welcomed in providing additional information on this matter.
- Acknowledgement that the current scale of the predicament facing the borough as well as others across the country was unsustainable.
- Commission members were updated that much groundwork had taken place within the sector in anticipation of the budget announcement. Partnership working continued with other authorities and the District Councils Network around the Housing Benefit Subsidy (the government contribution to the Council meeting its statutory duty) as the amount had been frozen since 2011.
- There had been marginal measures to assist the Council as a result of the budget, including increasing the cap from 40% to 50% on the percentage of the cost of a replacement home that can be funded from Right to Buy (RTB) receipts. It was noted that RTB sales had declined over the last few years and reforms had recently been proposed to the RTB scheme with suggestions that councils maintain a degree of local determination in the application of RTB policy which would allow discretion within the scheme.
- Following the Notice of Motion in February 2024, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing had written to various government departments to urge them to take decisive action following the housing emergency declaration. Concerns raised included the Housing Benefit Subsidy, additional housing pressures arising from asylum contingency dispersal (following the same principles as agreement for the Chagossians Overseas Territories Citizenship scheme), along with the impact of water neutrality. It was queried whether there was a need to campaign more openly and highlight the consequences should the housing issue not be addressed.
- Concerns were raised over the growing demand and constricted supply of housing, with the inevitable result of cost increases, which also impacted on other Council services. It was recognised that over the last several years, approximately 1600 affordable and social houses have been built and whilst water neutrality had impacted this, longer term housing development was key.
- Acknowledgement that the budget for 2024/24 showed a predicted new cost of £5.25m, however this was very much dependent on the success and delivery of mitigations being developed and delivered. Trends, costs and acquisitions were continually being explored however the risk factors were harder to predict.
- Clarity provided regarding the Water Neutrality Strategy that provided mechanisms for circumventing the issue. The current Crawley Homes retrofitting had come from the HRA and assisted the progression of housing development.
- Confirmation provided that population growth was a consideration and the Local Plan set out the figures and housing needs for the borough over the next 15 years. The Council would need to be using Duty to Cooperate with other authorities in order to meet its wider housing need.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted, with the views and actions expressed being acknowledged and documented by the officers.

7. Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC)

An update was provided from the most recent HASC meeting. Key items of discussion included:

South East Coast Ambulance Service Update –

- Nationally, ambulance services had remained in a challenged position throughout 2023, which had transitioned into 2024. The Trust had operated, at times, at its highest levels of escalation. Despite these pressures and following the national focus by NHS England on category 2 ambulance response times, the Trust's category 2 performance remained positive and on track to hit the 30 minutes mean target for the year, 2023-24.
- Overall, the Trust had improved its response times when compared to August/September 2023 and the Trust's positioning when benchmarked against ambulance services across England. However, was acknowledged that Trust response times were below the national Ambulance Response Programme targets.
- Emergency call answering had also been a significant challenge to the Trust and it was noted that maintaining the workforce at the Trust's "West" Emergency Operations Centre in Crawley was challenging due to Gatwick Airport and the service industries that support it. Options were being investigated to improve call times.

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust –

- There was a review of the previously considered Adult Social Care's self-assessment in preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC). Within that self-assessment document were a number of areas for improvement.
- The improvement programme was being delivered during a period of significant challenge, which included the need to support NHS partners in the facilitation of discharging patients from hospital, as well as manage increased demand for adult social care. Workforce recruitment and retention issues remained key, as well as independent and voluntary sector providers, with the fragility in the care market together with increasing prices across the whole care sector.
- Ongoing management oversight of the capacity required had been planned and resourced for the improvement programme during the remainder of 2023/24 and throughout 2024/25.

Performance and Resources Report – Adult Services

- The report had been designed to reflect the priorities, outcomes and measures included in the Council Plan.
- Work had continued this quarter to drive forward the two-year Adult Social Care Improvement Programme, which commenced in April 2023 and had been informed by work undertaken throughout 2022/23 to design models of care and support that were focussed on users of adult social care services.
- The performance for each area was highlighted including pressures and actions for ongoing work.

8. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

It was noted that this was the last OSC meeting of the municipal year. The reports that were listed on the Forthcoming Decision List for the late June 2024 meeting included:

1. Financial Outturn 2023-2024 (Quarter 4)
2. Treasury Management Outturn 2023-2024
3. Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2040

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.20 pm

M L Ayling (Chair)

Climate emergency action plan: update for OSC

11 March 2024

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Proposed Agenda

- Introduction
- Action plan performance
- Impact of action plan – emissions reduction
- Proposed changes to the current plan

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Introduction

- Climate Emergency Declaration
 - Approved by Cabinet: Jul 2019
 - Carbon emissions reduction commitments (direct and supply chain emissions)
 - at least 50% reduction by 2030
 - net zero by 2040 at the latest
- Climate Emergency Board and Action Plan
 - Approved by Cabinet: Nov 2021

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Action plan performance

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Overarching actions

- 14 cross-cutting actions relating to the overall delivery of climate commitments (5 complete)

	- Design and adopt action plan
	- Establish Board
	- Establish monitoring and decision-making tools and embed them in council practice
	- Climate awareness training
	- Identify sources of funding

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Use of Energy

- 29 actions relating to energy efficiency and reduction in gas consumption (7 complete)

	- Phase 1 of District Heat Network completed, decision on Phase 2 imminent.
	- Energy audits of building stock completed, carbon reduction plan in progress.
	- Roll-out of cloud-based computing and efficient devices completed.
	- Sustainable development criteria in local plan
	- Phase out of gas boilers.
	- Linking retrofit to planned maintenance.
	- Investing in Solar PV and battery storage

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Transport and Procurement

- 19 actions relating to measuring and reducing in travel and supply chain emissions (2 complete)

	- Hybrid working has reduced staff travel.
	- County-wide EV charging strategy is underway but roll-out is slower than anticipated.
	- Update to staff travel plan and travel policies needed.
	- Supply chain emissions are hard to measure. Procurement charter is being updated to embed decarbonisation in decision making.

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Waste and Green infrastructure

- 18 actions relating to waste reduction and enhancing Crawley's natural spaces (4 complete)

	- New conservation strategies being developed to reduce environmental impact of parks management. Tree strategy adopted, Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies being developed.
	- Government waste strategy due for implementation in 2025 will increase recycling rates and reduce waste.
	- New diesel refuse collection fleet procured (grid capacity and funding prevented alternatives). HVO (Biofuel) being investigated.
	- Communication and engagement strategy needed to help public understand approaches to conservation.

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Impact of action plan – emissions reduction

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Categorising Emissions

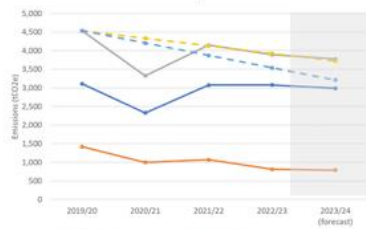
- **Scope 1**
 - Direct emissions from use of gas, diesel and petrol (7%, approx. 3,000 tonnes CO₂e)
- **Scope 2**
 - Emissions from electricity (5%, approx. 1,000 tonnes CO₂e)
- **Scope 3**
 - Purchased goods and services (mainly construction, but also contractor transport and staff commute; 88%, approx. 31,000 tonnes CO₂e)
 - Most UK local authorities have not made commitment for reducing scope 3.

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Emissions reduction (direct emissions)



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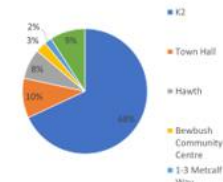
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Direct emissions: analysis

CBC scope 1 and 2 emissions 2022



CBC Gas consumption by site



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Direct emissions: action

- Urgent need for quality data and heat decarbonisation plans to unlock grant funding.
- Grant funding could provide 70% of capital expenditure
 - Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme announced for 2024
 - Suggested targets for grant application to be delivered in 2025/26

Site	Capital cost	Grant funding (to be bid for)	CBC Contribution (to be proposed)
K2	£5,000,000	£3,500,000	£1,500,000
Retrofit for other priority sites (Depots and community centres)	£2,000,000	£1,400,000	£600,000
Total	£7,000,000	£4,900,000	£2,100,000

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Proposed changes to the current plan

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Action plan refresh proposal

- Focus on delivery
 - Clear, targeted objectives,
 - Direct link to service action plans
 - Identifying Assumptions and dependencies
 - Owned by Climate Emergency Board
- Target for presentation to OSC and Cabinet: October 2024

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Proposed action plan: Scope 1

Proposed Target	- 90% reduction by 2030 (net zero)		
Priorities	Improve data quality	Buildings: Eliminate gas consumption	Transport
Delivery	- Automatic Meter Reading roll-out and bureau service	- Heat decarbonization through Energy Action Plan	- Electric vehicle programme - Bio fuel / HVO (short term)
Assumptions / dependencies outside our control	- Grant funding (Public sector decarbonisation scheme or similar) - Grid capacity (strategic engagement needed with UKPN)		

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Proposed action plan: Scope 2

Proposed Target	- 50% reduction in emissions by 2030			
Priorities	Energy efficiency	Electrification of heat	Strategic engagement with UKPN	Local generation and storage
Delivery	LED lighting, insulation, IT strategy	- Heat decarbonisation and electrification of heat through Energy Action Plan - 50% increase in electricity consumption by 2030	- Completion of Local Area Energy Plan or similar - Early submission of connection applications	Target 1,000 kW rooftop solar and battery storage
Assumptions / dependencies	- Grid decarbonisation - Grid capacity			

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Proposed action plan: Scope 3

Current Commitment	- 50% reduction by 2030, net zero by 2040		
Priorities	Supply chain emissions	Staff behaviour	Consumption and waste
Delivery	- Procurement charter to include consider emissions - Tools to identify impact of decision making on emissions	- Training and awareness - Staff travel plan (update to current plan)	- Training and awareness - Circular economy approaches
Assumptions / dependencies outside our control	- Grid decarbonisation - Contractors reducing their emissions		

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Supporting strategies needed

- Communications and engagement
 - New strategy planned for June 2024.
 - Carbon literacy training.
- Sequestration and offsetting
 - Needed to drive invest in green spaces, offset residual emissions and reduce risk of 'carbon tax' liability.
- Borough wide emissions
 - District heat network is most significant opportunity.
 - Transport remains key challenge.

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Conclusions

1. Significant progress made, but urgent need for delivery task prioritisation to stay on track.
2. Pathways to net-zero are clear for CBC's direct emissions, but many external dependencies.
3. Scope 3 emissions are greatest risk for current climate commitments.

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