

CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2024

Present:

Councillor Joanne Shaw (Chair)
Councillor Catherine Houston (Co-Chair)
Councillor Richard Mills OBE (Remote)
Councillor George Potter
Councillor Merel Rehorst-Smith
Councillor Catherine Young (Remote)

Alistair Atkinson, GEF (Remote)
Sam Peters, Zero Guildford (Remote)
Martin Wiles, University of Surrey (Remote)

In attendance:

Claire Upton-Brown, Assistant Director for Planning Development
Nat Prodger, Climate Change Officer (Remote)
Carrie Anderson, Senior DSO

Action By

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Jo Shaw welcomed everyone to the meeting that included guests from the Planning Policy Team.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Amanda Crease, Ben McCallan (SCC) and Robin Taylor, Assistant Director, Organisational Services.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024 were approved.

4. ACTION TRACKER

The action to update the Action Tracker between meetings was to be removed as this should happen routinely in any

Nat
Prodger

case.

SCC would be running workshops in September for districts and boroughs in regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) work. Cllr Shaw would forward an email she had received which set out dates and more detail to the other members of the CCB. There would be a discussion between the co-chairs and the lead councillor on the best way for GBC to approach this work. It was suggested that an all councillor briefing would be appropriate in due course. In the meantime, a Defra information sheet received by the Planning Policy Team would be circulated to all councillors.

Cllr Jo
Shaw

The LNRS would be added to the Board's work programme to receive an update later in the year.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) 2024

The Board welcomed Laura Howard, Dan Knowles and Benjamin Moyes from the Planning Policy Team.

Laura
Howard

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provided guidance and was not policy. The last Climate Change SPD was adopted in 2020 and it was due for a refresh. The draft SPD had been submitted to the council's internal Local Plan Panel for consideration and officers now sought the comments of the CCB prior to launching a period of public consultation commencing mid-June for a period of four weeks. A final draft would be presented to the Executive for adoption in either September or October dependent upon the time it took to process the response.

The council began the review of the Climate Change SPD after the Local Plan Development Management Policies (LPDMP), (part 2 of the Local Plan) was adopted on 22 March 2023. It was anticipated that the SPD guidance would improve the quality of planning applications submitted. Since 2020, there had been changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and regulations along with changes to emissions calculations and general construction practice. There were also changes in the DMP that needed to be reflected in the

guidance.

The general design of the document had been improved and the question format changed to encourage respondents to provide more in-depth answers.

The Board made the following observations:

- Training would be undertaken with planning officers to ensure that they were familiar with the updated guidance. It was likely that training would also be provided to the agent's forum to improve the quality of submissions.
- Certain areas had been expanded upon which was welcomed i.e., adaptation, biodiversity, demolition costs, flexibility for alternative uses and also heritage which was useful.
- There was no end date to the existing Local Plan, legislatively Local Plans were open ended. However, Local Plans were reviewed every five years to understand if an update was required. The council had reviewed the Local Plan Strategy and Sites (LPSS) which was now 5 years old and had found it did need updating. It was considered the LPDMP, which had only been adopted relatively recently and part 1 were consistent with the current NPPF, albeit the existing LPSS had been adopted under a different NPPF. Officers went on to confirm that the existing Local Plan would continue to be relevant until a new Local Plan was adopted in the future. The requirements of the current Government for new Local Plans were currently unconfirmed, under a new Government the requirements were also unknown. The Climate Change SPD would provide supplementary up to date guidance to those Plans until a new Plan was in place and may need to be updated as many times as necessary during that period to reflect any changes in the NPPF and building regulations.
- It was suggested the SPD might be prefaced by a statement of the council's ambition to reach net-zero by 2030 and of the council's commitment to go further than the minimum requirements with the backing of

the CCB. However, the document itself was a statutory tool not adopted policy which made it unsuitable for political assertions.

- Cooling streets and buildings as part of development was raised and it was noted that the SPD did also cover the landscape generally.
- Government was currently consulting on Future Home standards. In the meantime, the council was pushing existing building standards further in the SPD than was currently set out in regulations. It was expected that the SPD would already be largely in compliance with the new standards by the time they were published.
- One area where the council was always highly scored was its Climate Change planning policies.
- The SPD supported the internal aims of the University. The summaries were described as particularly useful.
- The use of words such as 'adequate' and 'proportionate' was queried as their meaning. There was a risk the document could become subjective unless these were defined, particularly section 3.2. In response, it was explained that the meaning of such words was set out in the LPSS.
- The use of Passivhaus¹ standard and BREEAM² in the document was welcomed. Albeit the SPD could be clearer that such accreditation was awarded following a postconstruction review and applicants would need to properly demonstrate their intention to reach such standards at the Planning stage to have permission awarded.
- Comments in paragraph 6 about the council having declared a climate emergency could be repeated in the introduction.
- Thought should be given to the users of the document. Large scale developers would be used to accessing documents such as this but smaller scale builders and householders may not. It should be accessible to all and possibly accessed earlier in the process at design stage. The document could make more reference to design.

¹ In Europe, a Passive House generally uses as little as 10% of the energy used by a typical building, or 25% when compared with the average new build designed for low energy consumption.

² BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method).

- The link to the guidance on the website was currently not working and should be fixed.
- There should be active reference to sustainable materials and the layout of sites above a certain size in the questionnaire.
- Ultra-low carbon impact development should also be acceptable along with zero/negative impact.
- The 'Very special circumstances' test was not defined and was appraised on a case by case basis. It was a high bar and was not confined to carbon emissions.
- Planning officers asked for members of the Board to submit any further comments via email and would be most appreciative if those comments could be submitted prior to the public consultation so that the SPD could be updated accordingly.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

In November 2023, the CCB decided that it would be beneficial to report back annually to the Executive and, with the agreement of the Executive, also to full Council. It was proposed the report would set out the business covered by the Board and external partners over the year; the forthcoming APSE report with the latest emissions data and the progress the council had made against the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) throughout the year including in the key priority areas.

Nat
Prodger

The Board was consulted on the proposed detailed content for the first annual report via a presentation delivered by the CCO.

The Board made the following comments:

- The level of content was about right. The report should set out the council's achievements to date at the outset and, importantly note those achievements against the financial context the council has been operating in since the CCAP was adopted in March 2023. The report should then go on to set out the aspirations of the council.
- The report should set out what the council is doing as a community leader, a partner organisation and whilst

operating within a network of local authorities to demonstrate the relevance of the actions the council was taking.

- There was no real expectation of what the forthcoming 2022-23 APSE figures would reveal in terms of the council's emissions. Some changes which saw the council's emissions reduce during the pandemic had not returned to previous norms for example, working from home was still significant across the organisation. In addition, recent energy cost increases had seen a rise in consciousness about energy use.
- The commentary around how the council was addressing the Scope 3 emissions would need to set out in the report, probably separately.
- There needed to be a relationship between what was on the CCAP and the net zero goal. If all of the actions were complete would the council be where it wanted to be. The proposals received from consultants previously with a trajectory would be used to illustrate this in the report.
- Include the adoption of the forthcoming new Corporate Strategy in which Climate Change and sustainability were key priorities and which would influence budgets.
- The business of the CCB could be illustrated by including hyperlinks to the minutes of the meetings on the council's website.
- The CCB and partners activities over the year should be contained to 1-2 pages at most.
- Some sections of the report should include the council's activities in regard to waste, air quality and biodiversity. Around half a page for each topic (executive summary).

7. CCO UPDATE

The Climate Change Officer's update was set out on page 83 of the agenda pack.

Nat
Prodger

The Board noted the forthcoming Big Green Week activities being undertaken with partner organisations.

The new Climate Change webpages would be released in the

next week.

There were no further comments.

8. **PARTNER UPDATES**

The Board received the following update from Zero:

- We received a 4-yr grant of £350,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund (not project-specific, so can also be partially spent on core operating costs such as utilities).
- We are recruiting for two new paid roles, an Operations Coordinator and a Project Development Coordinator. Both will be 4-day week roles funded by the Lottery grant. Lots of excellent applications so still narrowing down at the moment.
- We've run 11 events since opening the new space about a month ago, including;
 - The launch of the new Community Water Lab, which has enabled Water Rangers volunteers to test for E. coli in river samples (last weekend we found that E. coli levels downstream of Slyfield are nearly 16x the legal limit for safe swimming or boating, for example).
 - Food waste awareness week.
 - A presentation from Zero Hour on the Climate & Nature Bill.
- Other projects including adding a Nappy Library to the Baby Clothes Library, upgrading Green Read Share (the community library), and reopening the Library of Things at Guildford Library all ongoing. And that's just the ones with the word 'library' in!
- Visit from Environmental Health with no issues, 5-star rating received again.
- Several other visits from parties interested in potentially renting the building. Our 3-yr contract only has a guarantee of 6 months with a 3-month notice period, so we could in theory be kicked out by autumn.
- Surrey Climate Commission held their first AGM on 30 April (I think the anniversary of officially forming as a CIC, although the Commission has been going much

longer) and also launched the Surrey Climate e-Forum, which aims to be a 'one-stop shop' for individuals, community groups, businesses and more on all things climate and sustainability. It's available at <https://surreyclimate.forumcommunity.co.uk/>

- The Board noted that appointments to the vacancies should take place in a few weeks.
- The Board was disappointed to learn about the possible notice being given to Zero's High Street location and also to receive the results of the water testing from Slyfield. Other results from local testing were awaited. Currently, the results were being listed on the Water Rangers website and would be shared with the University for mapping. The Board, expressed deep concern and whilst noting the testing location was close to the sewage treatment works, would relay the testing results to Environmental Health for further investigation and confirmation that there was indeed a threat to public health. If so, there was a duty to raise public awareness. It was also suggested the National Trust might also be advised and that signage might be appropriate.
- Alistair offered to connect up the appropriate officers with the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee which was looking at flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines including the River Wey and to an extent water quality. Alistair would contact Carrie in this regard.

Alistair
Atkinson

9. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board noted that the energy usage item which had been due to have been considered today had been rescheduled for the July meeting so that the SPD could be considered. This would be the substantive item for the July meeting and the Comms item would be rescheduled to an alternative date.

10. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

17 July 2024
18 September 2024
20 November 2024
22 January 2025
19 March 2025