

Environment & Emergency Committee

Present: **Committee Members**

Cllrs Pitt (elected Chairperson), Banks, Dunford, Goodman, Simonis and S Smith

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Environmental Project Officer

Absent: Cllr Bolanz

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment & Emergency committee** held on **4th March 2025** at **6.15pm** in the Eaton's Centre, 18 The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

Public Participation

There were no members of the public present. No member of the public wished to address the Council.

088 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Bolanz.

ACTIONS

089 RESOLVED to co-opt Cllr Collins to the Environment and Emergency Committee for the duration of the meeting.

090 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

091 Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Environment and Emergency Committee meeting held on 14th January 2025 as a true and accurate record subject to amending that Cllr Pitt Chaired the meeting and specifying reference to hybrid vehicles to 'plug-in hybrid' vehicles.

092 Action List

Members received and noted the action list for the committee.

The Environmental Project Officer gave the following updates;

- Community Emergency Plan – A meeting had been held with the Chair of St Neots FLAG with regard to the plan, roles and responsibilities. Proposed amendments to the plan may come forward.
- Transition to Plug-In Hybrid Vehicles – Members noted that a report would be presented to the Operation and Amenities Committee seeking additional funds for the agreed replacement of two council diesel vehicles for plug-in hybrid alternatives. The additional funds were needed as second-hand vehicles could not be purchased due to lack of towing capability, which was essential and only available with the newest generation of PHEV Ford Transit Custom's, which was the vehicle identified and agreed by the Council.

093 Priory Centre Supply Chain Auditing

Members received and considered a recommendation on using a supply chain sustainability auditor to review the Priory Centre's produce chain. The Environmental Project Officer outlined the benefits and thought process of engaging an audit and the role it would play in reducing the Council's carbon footprint. It was explained there was an annual cost for the auditing platform and that this would be renewed on a rolling 12 month period.

Members discussed the proposed engagement of an audit and software package, highlighting benefits this would have for the Priory Centre and Town Council. Concerns were raised over the level of administrative burden that might be involved in maintaining the software/data. Members also discussed the timing of the audit, noting that due to the closure of the Priory Centre there may be a period whereby the Council has obtained the information it needs from the process prior to needing to reengage as the redeveloped Priory Centre is launched.

Members saw the value of engaging the audit process, but it was agreed that the Environmental project officer should look to further negotiate with the provider to seek a lower cost if the Council signed up for a period longer than 12 months. It was also asked that a query be raised about pausing the service in the event the Council has inactivity ahead of the Priory Centre re-opening.

RESOLVED that the Environment and Emergency Committee approves up to £4,776 in funding from the Carbon Neutral budget to pay for a sustainability audit of the Priory Centre's supply chain and associated recommendations for more sustainable purchasing. **RESOLVED** that the Environmental Project Officer have delegated approval to negotiate with the preferred contractor on the length of term and costs for engaging the company up to a maximum 24 month period.

A Member commented that they would like to see publicity around this work, explaining why the Council was doing it, what is working and lessons learned.

It was agreed to bring agenda item 7 forward to allow for more time to discuss agenda item 6, which would be a more detailed conversation.

094 Biodiversity for All Project

Members received and noted an update on the Biodiversity for All project following the recent completion of the first stage of works. The Environmental Project Officer outlined planting that had taken place at the Old Cemetery as part of the project. Wildflowers and bulb planting were due later in the year and bat and bird boxes will also be installed in due course.

The Environmental Project Officer was thanked for their work in bringing the project forward.

095 Climate Action Plan Ongoing Work Timeframe

Members received and considered a report with suggested timescales for completing actions from the Climate Action Plan. The Committee discussed the plan, priorities and timescales.

The Environmental Project Officer commented that timescales for some actions had been allocated in line with the proposed Neighbourhood Plan review, which could include some of the actions within the plan.

Members discussed prioritisation and the approach the committee might wish to take to establishing timelines for individual actions. It was suggested a separate meeting might be needed, but that the committee could take an early approach at highlighting key actions it saw as a priority.

Members noted that some actions in the plan, such as retrofitting council buildings and transitioning the vehicle fleet to environmentally better alternatives were already underway.

Members considered the actions in the CAP, with each Member presenting their view on priority actions. The following areas were common priorities amongst committee members and officers;

- Waste Management
- Environmental Asset Planning for Green Spaces
- Reduction in Pesticide Use
- Reduce Waste at Events and Cafe
- Increase/safeguard biodiversity

It was agreed that the Environmental Project Officer consolidate Members feedback and discuss with the Chair and Deputy Chair next steps and bringing forward actions.

096 Date of Next Committee Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Committee meeting will be agreed at a meeting of the Full Council to be held on 25th March 2025 as part of agreeing the 2025-26 meeting schedule.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON