

Pre-Scrutiny questions and answers on reports being considered by Executive on 10 December

(Forms part of the considerations at Group Meetings before a decision is made on which Executive reports will be called in for scrutiny by Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee)

Item 7 – Climate Emergency Action Programme (CEAP) Review - Report Author: Dave Barber

Questions asked by Councillor Milton:

1. Given the tight financial constraints on the Council at the moment, how can we ensure that the appropriate level of budget is prioritised?

Response:

2. If the required £60k funding is requested is not all used (due to additional funding from SDC) are there other areas that could be prioritised this year?

Response:

3. What other sources of funding have been identified and what progress has been made in sourcing these?

Response:

4. On page 14 there is a figure relating to the solar farm work of £40. I'm assuming this should be £40k?

Response: Correct

5. Can you confirm what the £5k relating to Abbey Fields Cycleway will cover? Will the Council ensure that work already conducted by Sustrans is used in order to reduce potential costs or reworking?

Response:

6. With regards to the carbon neutral ambitions around Kenilworth Leisure, what best practice is the council looking at and where does it believe that compromises will need to be made

Response:

Question asked by Councillor Syson:

1. On page 14 there appears to be a mistake relating to the Explore Solar Farm Feasibility costs. Should be £40,000 rather than £40.

Response:

Thank you, you are correct.

Question asked by Councillor Kohler

1. Item 1.1 of the Fuel Poverty Action Plan contains a commitment 'for all Council homes to be heated by non-fossil fuels by 2030', but it does not contain any details.

Is there an equivalent item on the Climate Emergency Action Plan? The closest I could find was a Domestic Energy Project theme initiative 'Fuel poverty strategy refresh', but again it does not contain any details.

Could you clarify if the Council has previously committed to all Council homes to be heated by non-fossil fuels by 2030 or is this a new commitment?

Response:

I am not aware that "all Council homes to be heated by non-fossil fuels by 2030" has been a previous action.

The issue you raise here actually links to three reports on the Executive agenda – including the HRA business plan as well as the two you have referred to.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan considered last February set out the strategy for reducing carbon emission from the Council's housing stock without making a specific reference to replacing heating systems. As the current CEAP report explains, our inability to hold a referendum in May means that we now need to refresh the CEAP. Further detail relating to carbon reduction in our housing stock will be set out in the refresh to be considered in May or June next year and this will need to dovetail with the Fuel Poverty Strategy and the HRA business plan.

Appendix 5 of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan report (item 6) sets out proposals to spend over £23million over the next 10 years on climate change work for our housing stock. This provides the core funding (hopefully supplemented by grant funding) to deliver significant carbon reduction. The detail of how this will be spent is currently being developed by the Housing Service, but you can see from appendix 5 that nearly half the spend is on central heating replacement. The precise nature of this needs to be worked out to ensure alignment with both the CEAP and the Fuel Poverty Strategy. As a result I am unable to say more at present about the nature of the programme for non-fossil fuel heating systems, particularly as the picture is currently changing rapidly at national level in relation to renewable generation from the electricity grid and the potential of hydrogen to replace existing natural gas.

What we can say at present is there is an action in the fuel poverty strategy which is backed up by significant resources set out in the HRA business plan

Question asked by Councillor Dearing on behalf of the Green Group

1. The strong commitment in the CEAP to reaching zero carbon targets is clear. However, while the phrase 'ensure new buildings are as close to net zero carbon as possible' may have been appropriate for developments that were underway before the Climate Emergency was declared it is now less appropriate for designs that have been developed since the Climate Emergency (e.g. Community Stadium and Spencer Yard). Is it possible to modify the CEAP to qualify 'as close to net zero carbon as possible' in terms of minimum standards or specific targets for construction and in-use performance?

Response:

Alan (Councillor Rhead) and I would suggest the short answer in relation to the Community Stadium is - yes, that should be possible. To achieve that we suggest that in Appendix 1, we change to wording from:

"Community Stadium - ensure new buildings are as close to net zero carbon as possible" to read **"Community Stadium – aim for the proposal to be zero carbon in operation and, in addition, consider the extent to which embodied carbon can also be addressed"**

For Spencer Yard, this is much more difficult as this scheme is for the refurbishment of existing buildings, including a listed building. So for that, we suggest we should leave the wording as it is. But we certainly need to keep this as a priority to encourage CDP to achieve as much as we possibly can, which is why it is picked out as an immediate priority for the CEAP