

## **Questions under Procedure Rule 11.2 for Council**

### **Q1. Question from Councillor Woodward to the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Ecology & Climate Change**

"When does the Cabinet Member intend to consult Councillors on the Lichfield District Visitor Strategy 2024-25?"

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Ecology & Climate Change**

"The Lichfield District Visitor Strategy is in development, working closely with partners via the Visitor Economy Network. We are currently reviewing feedback from the Network to develop the next iteration, which we will look to share with Councillors for their feedback by September."

### **Q2. Question from Councillor Harvey-Coggins to the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Ecology & Climate Change**

"With the recent changes to cabinet personnel, can I ask for assurances, for the residents of Lichfield District, that this Council's commitment to the climate change emergency and its work toward achieving net zero carbon emissions remains a priority. And that the Climate Summit, planned for later this year in the Cathedral, is delivered with measurable outcomes and commitment to this important issue."

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Ecology & Climate Change**

The Council remains fully committed to the climate change emergency and achieving net zero carbon emissions. Becoming the greenest district in the country is one of the four key priorities in our Lichfield District 2050 Strategy. The Strategy and associated Delivery Plan includes a series of key climate milestones and actions, including, restoring and increasing the district's biodiversity, increasing the scope and capacity of our recycling services and improving our green infrastructure.

Key to our commitment is our revised organisational Carbon Reduction Plan that I am taking the opportunity to review. This will be launched in the next month along with the new public version of our carbon dashboard, which we have developed to enable us to understand our baseline position from 2021 so that we can continue to make improvements and effectively monitor our progress.

The Climate Summit is still scheduled to take place and aims to engage both residents and businesses significantly. However, we are now recommending that we reschedule the summit to late Spring/Summer 2025. This decision follows research into a number of similar events and campaigns which highlighted that attendees often consisted of existing climate change advocates. To inspire a wider audience, including children and families who can drive behavioural changes at home, we are planning to have a series of engagements including

work in schools and smaller events across the district throughout Autumn, Winter, and Spring. The Summit we then hold will be the culmination of months of engagement, ideas and collaboration, providing the event with substantial content to further build on.

**Q3. Question from Councillor Marshall to the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

“Can the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee please indicate to what extent this council’s net zero strategy has been scrutinised by O&S, and has the Cabinet Member been invited to submit evidence relating to the strategy’s efficacy, appropriateness and potential cost?”

**Response from the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

I will answer Councillor Marshall’s question in 2 parts for the sake of clarity.

***Can the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee please indicate to what extent this council’s net zero strategy has been scrutinised by O&S***

By way of background I proposed the recognition of a Climate Emergency at the meeting of Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 and members agreed that:

‘Lichfield District Council recognises that a climate change emergency exists and in consequence, resolves to take this into account as a factor in future decisions of the Council and accepts that specific actions are necessary and therefore resolves that it will:

- Support the Government’s target of Net Zero Carbon Emission by 2050
- Actively consider investment in green technologies
- Ensure that, where appropriate, decisions made by the Council consider Environmental Impact
- Ask an Overview & Scrutiny Committee to investigate initiatives that will reduce our impact on the environment
- Name a specific Cabinet member for Climate Change’

**I list below the *occasions showing* scrutiny of the Council’s decision to support working towards net zero carbon emissions carried out by members to date.**

- 1) At the first meeting of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee on **the 15th of July 2021** members agreed the work programme and asked for information as to what actions and progress had been made by the Council since declaring a Climate Emergency. They noted that a briefing paper would be forthcoming and that this would be as soon as possible.

- 2) Members expressed disappointment to the Cabinet Member responsible for Climate Change at their next meeting, held on the **16<sup>th</sup> of September 2021**, that information on what had been undertaken so far had not been forthcoming. It was felt that as the Council had declared a Climate Change Emergency, it was getting time critical to have an action plan in place and meet the targets set by the Council. It was reported that the previous Chief Executive had taken the lead however due to the pressures faced during the pandemic, much had stopped. However there had been some improvements made including to Burntwood Leisure Centre. It was then reported that a new lead officer was appointed, following the departure of the chief executive, and a company called APSE to help gather baseline figures and work on an action plan. It was also reported that an Officer would be appointment on a two-year contract to lead on the matter as well as comprehensive training for other officers.
- 3) On the **7<sup>th</sup> of October 2021** O&S members received the Briefing Paper.
- 4) The Committee held on the **18<sup>th</sup> of November 2021** agreed to set up a Climate Emergency Task Group to be chaired by me and agreed the following: "To ensure the Council has a published and timetabled plan to get to net zero carbon emissions by 2050." With the key outcome being to, "Reach this target, ideally before this date, both within the Council's own activities and in the wider district with the support of its residents." This met on the **13<sup>th</sup> of December 2021** and agreed to invite a representative from Transition Lichfield and a representative from Whittington & Fisherwick Environmental Group because of their work and interest in this subject.
- 5) The Task Group met again on the **15 of March 2022** to consider the proposed Action Plan that was ongoing and developed post July last year following the receipt of the APSE report, which had been agreed by Leadership Team in January and which the leader and the cabinet member had also agreed it. The Task Group wanted to know when would the public and businesses be involved and how it would stand up to the Climate Emergency Action Plan Checklist that had been presented by me at the first meeting.
- 6) The Task Group met again on the **1<sup>st</sup> of February 2023** to question the newly appointed Cabinet Member responsible for Climate Change who was assisted by the Chief Executive.
- 7) An Internal Audit into the Council's report published that month listed a number of failures of progress and was only able to give a "limited assurance " 'judgement'.
- 8) The Climate Emergency Task Group met on **20<sup>th</sup> September 2023** to ask the newest (then) Cabinet Member for Climate Change to be asked a number of questions on the progress being made with the Action Plan and to hear his plans for his role.
- 9) He will see from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June and presented tonight that: "The Chair of the climate emergency task group agreed that the task group could be concluded now that the carbon dashboard was being implemented." The plan being to bring regular reports to the full Committee.

***has the Cabinet Member been invited to submit evidence relating to the strategy's efficacy, appropriateness and potential cost?***

Please see paragraphs 2, 5 and 8 that show we have been able to interview each of the Cabinet Members as they were appointed and were able to respond to the Briefing Paper submitted at 3. In addition, the last Cabinet Member had arranged additional presentations and briefings outside of Scrutiny but where I and other invited members were able to ask both he and officers a number of questions as to the Council's progress towards Net Zero.