

# Action Notes

Climate Change Action Group  
Tuesday 15 February 2022, 1.00 pm  
Virtual - Microsoft Teams



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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## **Members in attendance:**

Councillor Mark Whittington (Chairman)

Councillor Phil Dilks  
Councillor Barry Dobson  
Councillor Gloria Johnson  
Councillor Jane Kingman  
Councillor Dean Ward  
Councillor Amanda Wheeler

## **Officers in attendance:**

Gary Smith (Director – Commercial and Operations) (Vice- Chairman)  
Emma Whittaker (Assistant Director – Planning)  
Alison Hall-Wright (Head of Finance & ICT)  
Serena Brown (Sustainability & Climate Change Officer)  
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

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## **1. Welcome and apologies**

Apologies had been received from Karen Bradford (Chief Executive), Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive), Edward Hanna (Professor of Climate Science and Meteorology, University of Lincoln), Councillor Louise Clack and Councillor Nikki Manterfield

## **2. Full Council motion to consider integration of climate change in Planning decisions**

The Assistant Director for Planning introduced the item, which was to discuss the motion put forward by Councillor Phil Dilks at Full Council on 27 January 2022:

*“Whilst welcoming the cross-party work to date towards reducing carbon emissions as a result of the Council’s activities, this motion seeks to confirm and strengthen Climate Change mitigation considerations when determining major Planning applications across South Kesteven.*”

*This Council resolves:*

- 1. "Climate Change" is to be considered as a material consideration in all current and future major Planning applications (i.e. applications to create ten or more residential units and/or any development on a site of 0.5 hectares or larger).*
- 2. A specific "Climate Change" paragraph is included in all future reports for such applications coming to the council's Planning Committee for determination.*
- 3. Information is provided in the reports to committee detailing whether developments are proposed to be carbon neutral or offering reductions in carbon emissions."*

Through further discussion and deliberation, the motion was then amended to resolve to refer this motion to the Climate Change Action Group for further consideration, and to report back at the next meeting of Council.

A further amendment to the motion was proposed at Full Council as follows:

- 1. A specific "Climate Change" paragraph is included in all future reports for such applications coming to the Council's Planning Committee for determination.*
- 2. Information is provided in the reports to committee detailing whether developments are proposed to be carbon neutral or offering reductions in carbon emissions."*
- 3. That South Kesteven District Council resolves to push the Government to change the building regulation requirements in favour of increased climate change benefits and each building to be at the forefront of providing clean energy and reduce reliance on solar farms.*

The motion was rejected but it was agreed to refer the matter to the Climate Change Action Group.

The Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that a meeting had taken place between herself, Councillor Phil Dilks and the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy to consider a proposal to take to the next Full Council meeting on 3 March 2022.

The Assistant Director for Planning highlighted concerns around the original motion:

- Making a "Climate Change" paragraph in future reports to Planning Committee mandatory because what was material to any particular application must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- Information on carbon neutral/carbon emissions reductions of developers may not be available. At present, there were no policies that enabled the Council to seek this information from developers.
- A high number of applications being received included solar panels. It was highlighted that there were many other alternatives to provide clean energy that could be incorporated.

Following the meeting with Councillor Phil Dilks and the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, the following points were discussed:

- Planning Officers to incorporate comments on Sustainability and Climate change in every report where relevant to a planning application.
- The Planning Team to encourage developers to address Sustainability and Climate Change at an earlier point in the pre-application stage, where the Council could have a greater influence on the developers' plans.
- A suggestion was made to introduce technical advice notes that could provide guidance around how developers may address climate change and sustainability measures in their proposals; these would complement the current Design Guide.
- That the Climate Action Group could play a valuable role in drafting Planning Policies to incorporate Climate Change in the current Local Plan review.
- Discussion around the Council urging central Government to bring in changes in a top-down approach, with potential requirements being in favour of development addressing climate change mitigation.

One Member raised concern over reliability of technical advice notes as they would not carry the same weight as Local Plan policies. It was emphasised that a Carbon Neutral Policy should be considered for inclusion within the Local Plan review, following the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019.

It was discussed that central Government could do more to require developers to future proof new homes, due to the prohibitive costs of retrofitting energy efficiency and climate adaptation measures into buildings.

The Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that the technical advice notes were not adopted policy so did not carry the same weight. However, it was confirmed that they were still useful because they provided further guidance for developers and set out the Council's expectations.

Another Member noted that larger, older buildings had a lower carbon footprint. Until central Government provided a definitive guideline, the Council should encourage the reduction in carbon emissions involving planning applications.

It was confirmed that demolition of buildings meant the embodied carbon within the building had been lost, therefore, conversions could often be more sustainable than new builds. It was confirmed that the source of heating was not something that planning could control.

A query was raised as to whether there was any potential legislation being developed to address climate change mitigation/adaptation.

The Assistant Director for Planning reported that several Acts relating to climate change (including the Climate Change Act 2008) already had an input into the planning system. The concept around sustainability was a main element in the National Planning Policy Framework.

It was emphasised that making carbon efficient changes and 'retro-fitting' may have a higher cost, therefore it would be better if the changes could be made at the start of a development prior to work starting. An example of 'retro-fitting' could be that solar panels may be fitted on old roofs rather than photovoltaic tiles which were more aesthetically pleasing.

The Chairman noted that select developers may be pro-actively willing to explore options and want to incorporate ways of reducing carbon emissions in new properties, such as electric charging points, heat source pumps and photovoltaic tiles.

It was confirmed that in the short-term, developers would be advised that the Planning Committee would look positively at schemes that took a positive approach to climate change and sustainability.

A suggestion was raised of encouraging the reduction of carbon emissions in the district by displaying energy performance certificates of houses once they were listed for sale.

The Assistant Director for Planning noted that prior to selling or buying a house, an energy performance certificate could be provided. It was reported that energy rating certificates investigated many aspects of a building (insulation of roofs, double-glazing etc) although this was not something that the planning system could seek to control.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer confirmed that the energy performance certificates had been required for the sale of properties since the mid 2000's where properties were rated from A-G. These were assessed and issued at the end of the building process, just before a property was sold.

A query was raised in regard to adaptations, rather than mitigation to deal with climate change measures.

The Assistant Director for Planning advised that Planning already dealt with climate change adaptation. For example, in relation to flood risk, developers were already required to consider climate change when assessing flood risk impacts.

One Member highlighted that planning application forms did not include any reference to climate change and the developers could not provide mitigation actions in their original proposal.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer confirmed that air conditioning in all new homes would increase the demand for electricity and energy and this could not be depended upon as a solution to hot weather.

One Member suggested that the Climate Action Group met quarterly rather than twice a year. It was requested that a plan of meetings for the group be an item on the agenda for the April 2022 meeting.

The Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that the Planning Policy Team would attend Climate Action Group meetings, for the Group to have an input in reviewing planning policies.

The Chairman requested that the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property be invited to attend future meetings.

In terms of proposing a new motion to the Full Council meeting on 3 March 2022, it was agreed that the Assistant Director for Planning would liaise with Councillor Phil Dilks, the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Councillor Mark Whittington as Chairman of the Climate Action Group to agree draft wording based upon the debate at this meeting.

### **3. Any other business and next session**

There were none.

### **4. Close of meeting**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 14:00.