

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CLIMATE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2024 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS, LS1 2DE**

Present:

Councillor Jane Scullion (Chair)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Sarah Ferriby	Bradford Council
Councillor Scott Patient	Calderdale Council
Councillor Katie Dye	Leeds City Council
Councillor Jack Hemingway	Wakefield Council
John Clark	Private Sector Representative
Richard Goodfellow	Private Sector Representative
Gideon Richards	Private Sector Representative
Leah Stuart	Private Sector Representative
Jason Willis	Advisory Representative (Northern Gas Networks)
Jenny Cooke	Advisory Representative (The Environment Agency)
Martyn Broadest	Advisory Representative (West Yorkshire Housing Partnership)
Adam Ashman	Advisory Representative (Yorkshire Water)

In attendance:

Selvin Brown MBE (Director)	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Liz Hunter (Director)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Noel Collings (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Peter Glover (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Myles Larrington (Committee Services)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Vincent McCabe (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Jess McNeill (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Oluwafemi Omoniyi (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Guilherme Rodrigues (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Rob Tranmer (Officer)	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming attendees. The Chair proceeded to introduce a special guest, Selvin Brown, Director for Domestic

Net Zero Buildings at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The Chair invited him to say a few words about himself and his role.

Selvin Brown thanked the Chair. He explained that he oversees regulations, policy, and domestic home programmes, including the Social Housing Fund, within the department. He expressed his delight at being present and acknowledged the significant work undertaken by those in attendance.

2. Apologies for Absence

The Chair noted apologies for absence, which were received from Cllr Munir Ahmed (Kirklees Council), Private Sector Representative Jane Atkinson (Deputy Chair), and Advisory Representatives Jim Cardwell (Northern Powergrid), Neil Whalley (Northern Gas Networks), and Ian Holmes (West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board).

The Chair also highlighted that Enfinium had recently been nominated for an award and expressed regret that Jane Atkinson was not present to be congratulated in person. It was further noted that Jason Willis (Northern Gas Networks) attended the meeting in place of Neil Whalley.

3. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Chair, Cllr Jane Scullion, declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 relation to flooding, stating that she had experienced recent flooding at her property, following heavy rain in the Calder Valley during the preceding weekend. The Chair confirmed her intention to remain in the meeting during the discussion of the relevant item.

Gideon Richards declared an interest due to his involvement in a scheme with the University of Bradford regarding small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) funding through the Combined Authority.

Martyn Broadest declared an interest as his employer, Connect Housing, is one of the partners in the Solar PV and Battery Storage scheme supported by the Combined Authority. He also declared an additional interest due to his personal participation in the solar purchasing scheme.

Cllr Scott Patient declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 due to his role as a flood warden, referencing his experiences the preceding weekend in Calderdale when surface water flooding occurred.

4. Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items present on the agenda which required the exclusion of the press and public.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 July 2024

Leah Stuart asked for it to be noted on the previous minutes that she did give her apologies in advance of the meeting. The minutes were accordingly amended.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee held on 30 July 2024 were approved as a correct record with the above amendments.

6. Monitoring Indicators

The Committee considered a report providing updates on monitoring indicators for climate, energy, and the environment as part of the West Yorkshire Plan.

Officers introduced updates covering building energy efficiency, fuel poverty, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, greenspace access, and flood risks. Notable findings included slight improvements in energy efficiency, higher-than-average fuel poverty, slower growth in electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, limited greenspace access compared to other regions, and significant flood risks, particularly affecting Calderdale. These updates provided insight into regional progress and challenges in addressing key environmental objectives.

Members expressed appreciation for the data provided and requested clarification on targets up to 2038 and the incremental gains of recent initiatives, questioning if the progress was sufficient. Members discussed interventions addressing flooding, querying the impact on the number of homes affected and noting challenges as the risk increased with more properties impacted. They also highlighted work with the Environment Agency (EA) and plans to retrofit social housing.

Concerns were raised about disparities in electric vehicle charging infrastructure compared to other regions, with suggestions to learn from practices in the West Midlands. The EA's approach to property resilience was acknowledged, alongside suggestions to quantify employees affected by flood risks.

Questions about energy efficiency ratings and skewed data from building conversions were raised, with officers advised to improve data monitoring. Members also highlighted access to green space, suggesting collaboration with local plans to address inequalities, particularly in Calderdale.

The Chair summarised by emphasising the need for monitoring progress on efficiency ratings, fuel poverty, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, with updates requested for the next meeting.

Resolved: That the Committee noted the messages from the monitoring indicators.

7. Home Energy West Yorkshire

The Committee considered a report on the Home Energy West Yorkshire (HEWY) programme, which updated members on its progress and sought their views on future schemes. The report highlighted the region's housing-related carbon emissions, the programme's objectives to promote domestic

retrofitting, and updates on area-based initiatives, solar energy projects, and a low-interest retrofit loan scheme.

Officers introduced the report, outlining key achievements, including pilot schemes in Calderdale and Leeds, a collective solar buying initiative, and progress on loans. Members' feedback was sought on enhancing programme elements to meet net-zero goals effectively.

Selvin Brown informed the Committee that the government had set out the Warm Homes Plan to retrofit 5 million homes in five years, emphasising the need for clear standards and technology. The government had committed to improving energy standards and reforming Energy Performance Certificates (EPC). He noted that, in recent years, the social housing fund had increased from around £30 million to £3 billion. Quality remained uncompromised, with work based on the latest standards. Selvin Brown also looked forward to further devolution, with Combined Authority set to be the next area to receive enhanced functions after the West Midlands and Manchester.

The Chair commenced the discussion by referring to the regional programme for scaling up domestic retrofit, highlighting its complexity, long-term scope, and alignment with the Mayor's vision of warm, comfortable, low-carbon homes. Members noted the challenges posed by older housing stock but expressed determination to address them.

The Chair acknowledged local awareness of Home Energy Projects, emphasising the importance of word-of-mouth in promoting such schemes. Members discussed the need for increased funding, innovation, and rapid uptake, citing past successes like renewable heating incentives. Concerns were raised about barriers to adoption, the role of registered providers, and the risks of substandard work. Members highlighted the importance of community outreach and consistency across programmes.

Suggestions included leveraging knowledge transfer, engaging with social housing tenants, and exploring solar buying schemes. Members stressed the need for a clear national policy and robust supply chains to combat challenges like substandard tradespeople. Evaluation of scheme success, including quality and co-benefits, was deemed critical.

The Chair concluded by emphasising the need for continued collaboration with central government, recognising retrofit as a vital yet complex endeavour.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee noted the progress made so far on the delivery of schemes.
- (ii) That the Committee shared their views on ambitions to develop new schemes and endorsed the next steps required to do so.

8. Retrofitting Social Housing

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the social housing retrofit programme, which aims to improve energy efficiency in West Yorkshire's social housing stock. The report outlined progress, challenges, and planned activities to meet national and regional targets for energy performance, including achieving Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for all social homes by 2030.

Officers introduced the report, highlighting the completion of retrofit measures for thousands of homes, barriers such as funding constraints and tenant engagement, and plans for Wave 3. Solar panel installations were also outlined, aiming for significant carbon savings by 2026.

The Chair acknowledged the excellent work done by Connect and Together Housing in Calderdale's steep valleys. Members discussed the challenges surrounding the retrofit of pre-1919 stone terrace houses, particularly the interplay between heritage and energy efficiency, with some advocating for a nuanced approach to applying rules to these properties. Concerns were raised about tenant engagement, particularly in relation to taking advantage of disruptive works like bathroom and kitchen renovations.

It was noted that the report referred to social housing Wave 3 work directed by the Combined Authority, but there was also significant retrofit activity outside this, led by other councils and Together Housing. Members emphasised the need for consistent baseline data on climate sustainability, highlighting challenges in ensuring data quality across the region.

Selvin Brown remarked that the challenges should not be underestimated, praising the progress made in the region by retrofitting over 4,500 homes in the last five years. He noted that learning by doing was the best way to build capacity. Selvin Brown mentioned the importance of solar energy and planning restrictions on historical buildings. He also discussed the overbid for central government funding, with allocations expected in January, and the ongoing discussions with the Treasury for additional funding, which would form part of the devolution bill.

The Chair remarked on the transitional period for scaling up social housing improvements, acknowledging the challenges faced by local authorities. Officers concluded by highlighting the ongoing evaluation process and the importance of integrating retrofit with health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Chair concluded the discussion by expressing gratitude for Selvin Brown's attendance at the Committee.

Resolved:

- (i) The Climate Committee noted progress in the delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) programme and the Combined Authority's intention to submit a bid for Warm Homes (WH) Wave 3.

- (ii) The Climate Committee also noted the delay in delivering the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership (WYHP) solar scheme, while recognising that the outputs remained unchanged.

9. Flood Resilience Programmes - Update

The Committee considered a report updating progress on the Natural and Capital Flood Management programmes and the West Yorkshire Property Flood Resilience scheme for SMEs, highlighting flood risks, policy priorities, and funding challenges.

Officers introduced the report, detailing ongoing projects, such as Natural Flood Management initiatives and flood protection schemes. Key updates included funding adjustments, deliverability challenges, and future strategies. The Committee noted limited SME engagement and planned direct marketing to boost participation. Delegated authority was recommended to amend the programme pipeline, ensuring flexibility under the revised funding framework.

Members discussed the challenges of managing flood risks and the importance of continued innovation despite financial and viability gaps.

The Chair highlighted the need for adaptive strategies in the face of climate change and extreme weather events, such as Storm Burt, and emphasised the importance of education and behavioural change around flooding.

Officers provided updates on flood resilience programmes, including the removal of two projects due to cost and feasibility issues. A £5 million small-medium sized business (SME) scheme had been launched, but engagement remained limited, with efforts undertaken to improve outreach.

Members raised concerns about the adequacy of flood risk models, particularly in relation to planning and surface water management. There were calls for a more holistic approach to managing water across catchment areas, and for greater support for communities to engage in resilience-building.

Members also discussed the need to secure additional funding to address gaps in flood protection, with the potential for the Combined Authority to intervene in funding shortfalls. The Chair emphasised the importance of collaboration with local district partners and the Environment Agency to deliver integrated flood solutions.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted progress with both the Natural and Capital Flood Management programmes and the delays to some projects.
- (ii) The Committee noted the progress of the West Yorkshire Property Flood Resilience programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

- (iii) The Committee endorsed the revised approach for flood projects, the proposal to prioritise those projects that could commence delivery first, and the entry of two new projects onto the Capital Flood Risk Management programme pipeline set out in Appendix 2.
- (iv) The Committee delegated approval to the Director of Policing, Environment and Place, in consultation with the Chair of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee, to conduct any future review and reprioritisation of projects on the Natural and Capital Flood Management pipelines, to accept new projects onto either programme, and to transfer projects that posed greater risks to either programme lower down the flood pipeline for consideration as part of any future investment programmes.

10. Hydrogen Use Case

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the hydrogen roadmap study for the West Yorkshire region, aimed at supporting the emerging Climate and Environment Plan and Local Transport Plan.

Officers introduced the report, detailing the study's focus on hydrogen's role in decarbonising key sectors such as transport, industry, and heating. Key findings included the potential for hydrogen in industry, aviation, and transport, with a planned production facility in Bradford. The report outlined principles for hydrogen deployment and recommended engagement with stakeholders and development of local infrastructure.

Members discussed the potential for hydrogen development in West Yorkshire, noting concerns about the region's current position as a "prize taker" rather than a leader in hydrogen innovation.

The Chair raised the question of whether the Combined Authority should aspire to be an energy leader.

Members highlighted the progress made in other areas, such as Bradford's work on green hydrogen and the potential for hydrogen-powered transport, including buses and trains. There was concern about the long-term viability of hydrogen, especially regarding its environmental impact and the energy required for its production.

Members agreed that the Combined Authority should take a more proactive approach, particularly in terms of developing regional industrial strategies and supporting businesses with greater certainty.

The Chair emphasised the need for further investigations into hydrogen, particularly in relation to energy generation, and suggested that future discussions should involve other committees, including those focused on industrial strategy and skills.

Members referred to the East Coast Hydrogen and Bradford schemes, with Jason Willis highlighting Northern Gas Networks (NGN) as a leader in this

area. He expressed willingness to engage in further discussions with the Committee on potential pathways. Members also raised concerns about the impact of hydrogen production on water availability, referencing a recent news article. Adam Ashman confirmed that Yorkshire Water was aware of the issue.

Resolved: To have sought a steer from the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee on the identified principles for developing a policy position on hydrogen for West Yorkshire.

11. Draft Climate and Environment Plan

The Committee considered a report providing an update on progress made in delivering the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan and transitional arrangements for the next plan.

Officers introduced the report, highlighting key achievements including the Zero Emission Bus Programme, the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Framework, and solar panel installations. They outlined the development of the new plan, set to run from 2025 to 2038, focusing on areas like transport and housing, and emphasised continued activity until its adoption in Spring 2025.

Members agreed on the importance of narrowing the focus of the plan to ensure clear communication with the public about the use of public sector funds.

The Chair highlighted the need for transparency, particularly regarding the 2038 target, and emphasised the risks of spreading efforts too thinly.

Members welcomed the focus on transport and housing as vital components for carbon reduction. A discussion on consultation highlighted the importance of engaging marginalised communities and ensuring that consultations reach the necessary audiences.

Members also discussed the need for coordination across local authorities and the value of further conversations to refine the plan. The Chair noted the importance of future-proofing the plan and welcomed further engagement on the initiatives.

Resolved: That the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee noted the update.

12. Date of the Next Meeting and Chair's Closing Remarks

Before closing the meeting, the Chair noted that the date of the next meeting of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 25 March 2025. The Chair highlighted that there would be no mayoral or local council elections in 2025.

The Chair thanked attendees for their contributions to the agenda and expressed appreciation for their engagement. Concluding the remarks, the

Chair wished everyone a very good Christmas and festive season, acknowledging that it was early to do so but hoping the sentiment would be appreciated.