

Climate Change Sub-Group
20 July 2022

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-GROUP held on Wednesday 20 July 2022 at 7.30 pm in the Via Zoom

PRESENT: Councillors D. Richardson (Chair)
A. Hellyer, R. Lass, G. Moore, J. Quinton and J. Weston

ALSO PRESENT Councillor S. Kasumu (Executive Member, Environment & Climate Change)
External Speakers IChoosr Business Manager (Marie-Louise Abretti)
HCCSP Projects Lead Officer (Helen Burrige)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Assistant Director, Planning (C. Dale)
Landscape & Ecology Manager (O. Waring)
Economic Development Officer (L. Devayya)
Democratic Services Assistant (B. Taylor)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Lake.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 were approved as a correct record by the Chair.

3. ICHOOSR - SOLAR TOGETHER SCHEME

Members received external presentation from Marie-Louise Abretti, Business Manager at IChoosr on the Solar Together Herts Scheme. IChoosr is an independent group buyer founded in the Netherlands in 2008 and have delivered 800 group buying schemes across 5 countries. IChoosr have been operational in the UK since 2013; they promote group buying as a win-win for all those involved. Marie Louise highlighted the benefits of the Hertfordshire Solar Together scheme for the residents and the councils when the scheme launches in August 2022. The benefits included:

- Cost effective
- IChoosr handles procurement process
- Helps carbon reduction and promotes green energy
- Experts are used providing reassurance to residents
- IChoosr completes a vetting process on potential suppliers
- IChoosr provides a helpdesk for residents

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The presentation outlined how the scheme would work going through five stages. The first was the registration period where residents would receive letters and there would be a marketing campaign where residents have five weeks to sign up for the scheme.

The second stage was the auction. IChoosr works with installers in the region; vetting them to ensure they are qualified and able to deliver the scheme. Ahead of the launch of the scheme, this stage is already occurring ahead.

The third stage is personal recommendations. IChoosr contact residents about how many solar panels they could get and the price. The validated installer would be promoted to the resident.

The fourth stage gives residents five weeks, and they would receive additional information. If a resident agrees then a £150 deposit would be required which will be held by a 3rd party. The deposit would be deducted from the final bill after installation. The deposit will be refunded should the resident decide not to proceed. The resident and solar panel installer agree a date for the work to be completed; IChoosr would remain available to help the resident.

The final stage is electricity savings.

The following points were noted:

- Members felt it was a good scheme to be part of.
- Members asked if additional green technology such as air source heat pumps and insulation were available. Marie Louise stated heat pumps were in a pilot stage in the Netherlands. In the UK the options are with or without battery storage and residents can add EV charge point.
- Members queried the auction style and it was clarified that potential insulators submit a bid, IChoosr vets and check qualifications. The most competitive price in the region for the best quality product wins.
- Members sought clarification on how many cycles of registration would be available and how far apart they would be. Marie Louise stated it would be down to the councils to decide the frequency, however, most do one annually. IChoosr promote 4 rounds per year. For the Herts Solar Together Scheme the registration period will remain open till mid-September with installation starting in October/November. The installation process could take between four and six months.
- Members expressed that the next stage could open up during the first installation period.
- Members asked if there was a fee to be involved in the scheme. It was explained that there was no charge to the council. The installer paid a small fee to IChoosr.
- Members asked if there had been any difficulty with supply chains. It was stated there had been some challenges over the past few years. Marie Louise stated that prices are fixed for the residents no matter when they are installed and ordering in bulk can all security. IChoosr cannot promise

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no delays but the company checks the installers contingency plan and supply chain.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted

4. HCCSP INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS SO FAR

Members received a presentation from Helen Burridge, HCCSP Projects Lead Officer. It was explained that HCCSP was a body of the ten councils, county council and the LEP, and was the strategic group for partnership in environmental and sustainability issues. HCCSP was formed in 2019 and was funded by contributions from each of the partners. The partnership had created an action plan covering six areas: carbon reduction, biodiversity, water, transport, behaviour change and adaptation. Four of these are available online with behaviour change launching in the autumn and adaptation was being formulated.

It was stated that 150 actions had taken place and could be split into three groups:

- Direct control of the council
- Regulatory powers, such as licensing and planning, leveraging change
- Influence and facilitation by communications

Helen Burridge provided brief outlines of the published strategic action plans and stated some achievements in the carbon reduction, transport and biodiversity action plans. It was stated the partnership work was strengthen between departments and the group meets every 5-6 weeks.

The following points were noted:

- Members expressed concern over the draft behaviour change action plan as men and women were treated the same and felt they had different experiences such as commuting. Helen Burridge stated the behaviour change was the most challenging action plan by trying to embed change on a vast population on limited resources. It was stated that the action plan talks about projects and there would be different ways to segment depending on what audience was targeted. Helen Burridge stated the partnership work was occurring with the University of Hertfordshire to help deliver the action plan.
- Members asked whether the two-tier structure of local authorities in Hertfordshire created obstacles. Helen Burridge stated there was strong partnerships between councils and their funding created her role and a coordinator position. All work between partners was moving in the right direction and there can be challenges around pulling information together.
- Members asked whether there were planning stipulations on what developments should go ahead in relation to climate change. It was stated the new builds should be, and run, at the appropriate carbon rating. There

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were also issues around retrofitting as most housing had an individual needs.

- Members sought clarification when the adaption strategic action plan would be available. Helen Burridge stated it could be ready for the first quarter of the next financial year as stakeholders need to come together.
- Members queried whether there would be an action plan on food sustainability. Helen Burridge stated that food waste was run by Herts Food Partnership.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

5. WHBC PROJECTS ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Members received a verbal update from Officers on the Council's own Action Plan. Officers stated this update followed on from the Achievements update. Officers informed Members of the interim procedures in place since the Energy Efficiency & Climate Change Officer retired in May 2022. Team Energy are delivering an energy bureau service, and were monitoring the Council's energy bills, liaising with the energy supplier if bills seemed particularly high and could validate payments. Carbon Minded provided an officer to deliver the energy audits for Eastern New Energy. WSP was creating a report on the Council's Climate Action Plan and would provide recommendations. Officers highlighted the Sustainable Warmth Grant would be launching in September of up to £10,000 for housing with an energy rating between D-G and those with a household income of below £30,000. There would be a dedicated Sustainable Warmth Officer based at East Herts District Council to oversee the project.

The following points were noted:

- Members sought greater detail on the EV charge Policy and the Hertfordshire wide EV charge plans. Officers stated information would be provided.
- Members asked about the one license available for GIS. Officers stated that the County Council pay for the license, and they are looking to see if they can get it on the current system rather than having two.
- Members asked about the single access point on the council website for climate change. Officers stated they would check with the communications team. Officers stated there was infographics on the ONE Welwyn Hatfield website.
- Members asked about the promotion of the LAD3 scheme and whether officers targeted low-income households. Officers stated the new coordinator will manage that. The grant would be for residents that own their homes or privately rent.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

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6. HERTFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP (HCCSP)

Members received a verbal report from the Executive Member (Environment and Climate Change) as the Council's representative to the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). The Executive Member informed Members that he attended his first HCCSP meeting on 7 June 2022. The Executive Member stated they were new to the portfolio having taken it on in May 2022. It was stated that 31 quick wins had been achieved and good progress was being made. Work was ongoing on the EV policy and taxi licenses to coordinate a more strategic EV charging strategy. Members were informed of a presentation from Watford Borough Council on the rediscovery of the River Colne and a 10-year plan to increase biodiversity in the area. The Executive Member stated that work had been improved on the Climate Action Plan which would improve Welwyn Hatfield's ranking when the county's action plans are reviewed again.

The executive Member stated the next HCCSP meeting would be 21 July 2022.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.32 pm
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