

Climate Change Sub-Group
9 November 2022

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-GROUP held on Wednesday 9 November 2022 at 7.30 pm Via Zoom

PRESENT: Councillors D. Richardson (Chairman)

A. Hellyer, J. Lake, R. Lass, G. Moore, J. Quinton,
J. Weston

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) (I. Hancock)
Assistant Director (Regeneration and Economic Development) (G. Sampson)
Service Manager (Investment Programme Delivery) (P. Horsley)
Service Manager (Asset Management, Building Repairs and Climate Change) (M. Croft)
Landscape & Ecology Manager (O. Waring)
Economic Development Officer (L. Devayya)
Parking & Playground Services Manager (E. Robova)
Democratic Services Assistant (V. Mistry)

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022 were approved as a correct record by the Chair.

15. DE-CARBONISATION IN HOUSING

Members received a presentation from the Service Manager (Investment Programme Delivery) on De-Carbonisation in Housing.

To deliver Net Zero Carbon the UK became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. This target will require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. For Social Housing, it means that Carbon Dioxide emissions from buildings must reach zero by 2050 and there will be a ban on fossil fuel heating in new build homes by 2025. Also, existing homes must meet EPC C by 2030.

An EPC is a certificate that shows how energy efficient a property is. A property will be given an energy efficient grade between A and G with A being the most energy efficient. The government expects the council to achieve EPC grade C on all properties by 2030.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council plan to meet these targets by doing a data refresh and develop a programme of stock condition surveys and retrofit assessments which will help the council identify the energy efficiency of each home. Once this has been done, a programme table will be created outlining

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how many properties meet each grade. A programme will be developed to ensure the council properties meet at least EPC grade C. The council are working on putting in a bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. The council will take a Fabric First approach to improve energy performance of properties and consider more suitable heating solutions.

In regards to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Bid, the government committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. This was targeted for homes rated EPC D and below and there were currently around 1.6 million social homes that fall into this category. The council are working with their partnering contractors Morgan Sindall in developing the bid under Wave 2.1. The council will install energy performance measures on 173 of the lowest performing homes, this will include Howard House and a number of non-traditional construction type dwellings.

A 'fabric first' approach means Proper insulation. This includes internal/external wall insulation, Cavity wall insulation, loft and roof insulation, floor insulation, double or triple glazing for windows and low energy lighting. The objective of 'fabric first' is to improve airtightness in buildings. This helps limit the amount of heat escaping from a building and stops drafts from entering.

There are a lot of new emerging heating technologies such as air-source heat pumps. These are currently very expensive for landlords and tenants and have lower outputs in comparison to current systems. There is also a lack of expertise in the sector as well as lack of user awareness. The council will work with the industry to make sure the right solution is chosen.

The following points were noted:

- Members asked if the 173 lowest performing properties were all the council properties that were below Grade C. Officers stated that they were in the process of refreshing their energy data. Officers did not know how many properties were below Grade C. To identify the properties, the council look at construction type and which properties are performing badly. Currently the council have identified these and submitted these properties as part of the bid.
- Members asked if when installing heat pumps and other technologies, are they liveable upgrades or would tenants have to move out. Officers said the council will plan and programme the works to get them done as quickly as possible while the tenant is residing at their property.
- Members asked if the heat pumps also work for reducing humidity in a property. Officers said that the council would use the pumps for the purpose of providing heating solution to the property. This will help the council achieve Net Zero carbon and de-carbonisation.
- Members asked if there is money available to do a whole retro-fits for buildings. For example installation at Howard House, would there be money to repair the roof and guttering and do it all as one project. Officers stated that in terms of Howard House specifically, the council have

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proposals to do a major refurbishment project which will include all the maintenance. In terms of retro-fitting, the council are looking at houses primarily as well and packaging up those repairs and work on those all in one go.

- Members asked what sort of measures the council have in place about the lack of awareness for using this technology and what do we do to educate residents on how to use the systems. Officers said that when it comes to lack of education that is primarily around the heating installation and the council have not yet decided what the best heating solution is. Once the council have got an idea of which heating solution they will be using, Officers will then put together an educational guide for residents on how to use them.
- Members asked what the time span was for installing the heat pumps for council properties and will it be as a programme over a number of years. Officers stated the 173 properties that were identified, was to do with the fabric first approach such as installation, windows and improving the air-tightness and energy efficiency of the properties before installing the heating solution. The council will look to choose the right heating solution in the near future and then put together a programme of works which will then deliver the installation of the heating solutions, this had not been agreed or finalised as of yet.
- Members asked what happens with properties which are mixed-tenancies such as private leaseholders and council tenants, and asked if the whole building will be completed or will it be offered to the other occupants of the building to have it done at the same time. Officers said that if there is a block of flats, it would make sense to install those improvement measures across the block rather than leaving gaps which can cause problems in the future with damp and mould in certain areas of the property. The council would speak to leaseholders about it and make sure the tenants were aware of what the council were proposing to do.
- Members asked if the ventilation had been considered to go along with the installation to prevent mould and damp. Officers said they have considered ventilation as part of the proposals. Officers said that the council were about to embark on a significant investment programme on the housing stock with new kitchens and bathrooms. A £100M programme to get underway from April 2023. In the process of procuring those programmes and when fitting new kitchens and bathrooms the council will also be installing mechanical extraction at the same time so this will pick up the ventilation issues.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

16. DE-CARBONISATION OF CORPORATE PROPERTY

Members received a presentation from the Service Manager (Asset Management, Building Repairs and Climate Change) on the De-Carbonisation of Corporate Property.

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In February 2021, the council were awarded funding for three sites. These were Campus East – Council offices, Campus West and Hatfield Swim Centre.

It was noted that the council need to provide enough detail when faced with a short timeframe to collect information. It means generally relying on estimations of outputs to consider the figures that will be put forward as part of the bids and rely on data sheets which are provided by the manufacturers.

A solution the council want to progress for the future is to develop the design at an earlier stage so when it comes to potential funding bids, officers can provide even more information which can then set the council aside from competitors.

There were time frames to abide by, these were Procurement which had existing frameworks and Special dispensation to bypass procurement procedures. Planning approval which was reliant on Stage 4 design so needed to have this done early as it can take up to 12 weeks for approval. Plant lead time was reliant on Stage 4 design and to place an order as soon as planning approval is received.

The benefits of developing designs early improve chances for receiving funding, reduced principal contractor procurement time and enables an early planning application submission. As the council works toward the target for Net Zero, the council will be evaluating assets with detail and renewing condition surveys across the portfolio which will provide up to date information and allow the council to develop designs early on, to ensure the strongest bids possible.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

17. WHBC PROJECTS ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Members received a verbal update from Officers on the Council's own Action Plan.

The Council is the delivery partner of the Eastern New Energy ERDF project, and has a target to carry out 30 energy audits at SME premises. The council had now received its 30th registration form so will meet the target and possibly exceed it as the scheme has been extended to May 2023 and was previously due to finish in December 2022. Businesses can also apply for a grant of up to £5,000 to carry out recommended works from the energy audit. To date the council have paid out about 13 grants which total around £38,000. The scheme will be promoted to businesses based in council owned commercial premises to see if they would like to change their lighting to LEDs which will greatly reduce their energy bills. The businesses would still need to seek a licence from the Council to carry out the works, however they will not be charged the normal fee for doing so.

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Officers stated that in regards to the Hertfordshire Solar Panel Bulk buy scheme, the council have had 662 residents who have expressed an interest in purchasing solar panels and of those 101 have accepted the quotes. Across Hertfordshire there were about 13,500 registrations and just under 1,500 were proceeding to the next stage and have paid a small deposit of £150. For any reason the solar panels cannot be fitted or the resident changes their mind, the deposit will be refunded.

Officers stated that in regards to the 'Your Tree, your future' a county wide tree give away scheme, all 38,180 trees on offer in year one had been claimed and these were funded by Hertfordshire County Council. In addition to this, the Council funded a further 6,120 trees specifically for Welwyn and Hatfield residents and all of these have been claimed. The collection date for the trees is likely to be Saturday 3 December 2022 and ties in nicely with National Tree Week. A link will be set up so that interested residents can join a waiting list to sign up for a tree in next year's scheme.

Officers stated that in regards to the Electric Carpool Scheme, the contract is now with Enterprise. They took over at the end of August 2022. So far 21 members of staff have registered to be part of the scheme. 15 of those have made bookings, 3 have made more than 10 bookings and in total the council have had 84 bookings. Also 34 virtual bookings had been made by 6 members of the public. The residents can use the electric cars Monday to Friday during out of office hours and book them on the weekend too. Officers will be putting a message in TeamTalk to promote the Carpool Scheme with a link to sign up. Enterprise will also be coming in to provide a demo of the cars.

The following points were noted:

- Members asked what the timeframe was on the electric vehicles structure, it says March 2023 but is that installation or deciding where they should be placed. Members said that a strategy needs to be in place for EV charging. Officers stated that the project EV 2 should be completed and installed by the end of the financial year.
- Officers said that these specific EV points were part of a grant and will be installed using a grant award from OLEV, so it is the terms of this grant which dictate the locations of the EV charging points. Officers will be working towards a formal strategy to move this council forward in terms of future installations. With this particular installation, the council are very limited in choices of location if they want to effectively have these free installs. The award had been made and the Council were required to install these by 31 March 2023 in order to facilitate the grant.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

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18. 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 stated that HCCSP had their annual event on the 9 November 2022 and the main focus for the annual event was Behaviour Change and Climate Adaptation work being done by HCCSP.

It was noted that the terms of reference had been enhanced to work with Hertfordshire University in order to solidify the close working relationship. Work is being completed around the enhancement and expansion of natural habitats and biodiversity across the county. There is also work being done around bulk purchasing schemes for renewable energy technologies.

It was noted that HCCSP had a new website and will hopefully make the work of the partnership clearer for people.

Members who attended the HCCSP event stated they found it informative and interactive and would like more events in the future.

Meeting ended at 8.13pm
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