

Climate Change Sub-Group
8 March 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-GROUP held on Wednesday 8 March 2023 at 7.30 pm Via Zoom

PRESENT: Councillors D. Richardson (Chairman)

A. Hellyer, R. Lass, G. Moore, J. Quinton, C. Stanbury,
J. Weston

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) (I. Hancock)
Assistant Director (Regeneration and Economic Development) (G. Sampson)
Landscape & Ecology Manager (O. Waring)
Democratic Services Assistant (V. Mistry)

26. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitution of a Committee Member had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules:

Councillor C. Stanbury for Councillor J. Lake

27. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Lake.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 were approved as a correct record by the Chair.

29. CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY UK SCORECARDS

Report of the Service Manager (Asset Management, Building Repairs and Climate Change) on the Climate Change Emergency UK Scorecards.

This report sets out an explanation of the assessment that all UK councils have undertaken around climate change last year which was Round One. The council is now moving into Round Two and the details of that are set out in the report.

It will be hard to benchmark against last year because this year the assessment criteria has changed. Assessment of these criteria takes the form of FOIs, volunteer research and national data. The council have already had some information requests coming through and should receive the result of the scorecard around Autumn 2023.

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Following the Senior Management restructure, there is now a Service Director and Service Manager in place focussing on Climate Change. There is also a Climate Change Officer in the structure and this is currently being recruited to.

The council have now reviewed their action plan, with some external support and it has been published on the council website. There are some case studies on the website.

Officers believe the council are in a stronger position for the assessment this year, but there is still much to do.

The following points were noted:

- Members noted the collaboration and engagement is now rated in the new scoring which was something the council were heavily criticised for in the previous assessment. Members stated that looking at the action plan, quite a few of the engagement actions have not been started and members were concerned that this will impact on the score for this year, especially since the responsible person was listed under the Corporate Strategy Engagement Manager. Members asked what is being done to address this as the engagement actions should progress now without the Climate Change Officer in post. Officers stated that the team were doing more work around collaboration engagement. The Assistant Director (Regeneration and Economic Development) was working on engagement with local businesses in the area. There were lots of projects in the pipeline and the team are building up resource capability so that once an officer is in post they can start these projects.
- Members asked if officers could tell them more about the Director of Climate Change and when the Climate Change Officer is expected to be in post. Officers said that the Director for Climate Change is the Service Director (Property Maintenance and Climate Change) and has been in post for a few months. There is also a Service Manager with Climate Change in the responsibilities. The Climate Change Officer is a new role and it was advertised but was unsuccessful in recruiting to the post. The council will be continuing the recruitment and widening the advertising to hopefully find the right candidate.
- Members asked if the council have actually done enough in the 18 months to prove that the council are moving forward with climate change. One of the criticisms before was the lack of plans for action. Members felt that the council had not moved forward enough to make a big difference to the assessment. Officers stated it was a fair reflection but are moving forward with climate change. There has been work on commercial buildings, improving energy efficiency and looking at housing stock. The council have been promoting case studies on the website as there have been good things happening within the borough. Momentum will increase once the Climate Change Officer is in post.
- It was noted the action plan now includes target dates and the action plan will come back to the group to look at in the future.

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**RESOLVED:
(unanimous)**

Members agreed to note the report.

30. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Report of the Service Manager (Asset Management, Building Repairs and Climate Change) on the Climate Change Strategy.

In 2019, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, along with other local authorities, declared a climate emergency and set in motion a target to obtain an ambitious Carbon Neutral status by 2030.

The council devised a Climate Change Strategy which comprises of 5 key objectives which are:

1. To reduce carbon emissions from our own estate and operations to net zero by 2030, or a justification for a later date if the review finds this unachievable.
2. To comply with statutory obligations to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
3. To work with, support, encourage and engage residents, communities, businesses and other partners in initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.
4. To embed climate change mitigation and adaptation into our plans, strategies and policies.
5. To reduce carbon emissions across the borough by promoting energy efficiency measures, sustainable construction, renewable energy, sustainable transport and behavioural change.

The updated strategy provides a higher level of detail which is in line with other organisations within the UK, this coupled with the Climate Action Plan (CAP) will allow WHBC to adopt a measurable approach to tackling the effects of Climate Change.

The following points were noted:

- Members asked what metrics are going to be put against each of the strategic objectives so that the council can assess whether they are on its way to net zero. Officers stated the Service Manager for Climate Change is working on assessing the base lines, what the carbon position is at the moment as a council, and then will be developing targets around metrics.
- Members said the update does not seem to be huge and not specific in terms of what the council wants to achieve with the strategy. Members said the action plan does have quite a few projects that have not been started and others 'in progress'. Members thought it might be useful to have updates on progress at future meetings and explore them a bit more. For example looking at North and East council waste management, resident engagement strategy and the outcome of that might inform how the frequency of the Welwyn Hatfield waste collection could be. Members

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also stated that some of the projects could be started now without a Climate Change Officer, for example the engagement work has been appointed to the Engagement Manager in the council. The Implement biodiversity net gain policy which sits with planning could perhaps get started. Officers stated they understand the points made and will look at how to bring back updates and progress to the group for future meetings to provide members with assurance on how well the council is progressing.

- Members said that looking through the list of actions, some had already been completed but there were some that say 'not started' such as the solar panels and charging points on EMS. Members thought maybe the plan was not finalised yet.
- Members asked if the intention of the website was to encourage residents to inform themselves about what is happening in the borough, and suggested it lacked inspiration. Members stated that on the Three Rivers website it was full of pictures and ideas. Members asked if there was a way of making the website more interactive with more pictures or videos. Officers stated they were developing the website and making it user friendly for residents. There were limitations on what can be put on the website.
- Members said that when it comes to receiving the data, it would be helpful to have them in visual format instead of a table with numbers, and while it does have all the information needed it would be better to have it presented in that way. Officers stated they will note it and look into that.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

The Climate Change Group were asked to comment on the strategy and recommend its adoption to Cabinet.

31. GENERAL UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Members received a verbal update from Officers on how the council is doing with Climate change plans.

In regards to the Climate Change Officer post, the council have gone out for recruitment but have not been successful. The marketing plan is being reviewed and the post readvertised shortly.

The council have been successful with the government's public sector decarbonisation scheme. The council have won some grant funding for Hatfield Leisure Centre and Panshanger Community Centre which means the council can replace the old, inefficient gas-fired heating systems with air source heat pumps which links into the climate action plan to reduce the carbon footprint. This work is looking to get underway in the summer. Calculations suggest the council will reduce carbon emissions by 60 tonnes a year on top of the 400tonne reduction that has already been achieved.

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The government have set a target that all housing stock needs to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) by 2030 and net zero carbon by 2050. The council have commissioned as part of a stock condition survey, to undertake EPC assessments of all council homes. The council will be able to put plans in place to deliver that by 2030.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

That the update be noted.

32. HERTFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP (HCCSP)

As the Executive Member was not in attendance, the Service Director gave a brief update stating that officers and the Executive Member had a meeting with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) on the annual review. At the meeting discussion took place on representations from various groups and how the Partnership can work closely together whilst developing the structure and having the support from Hertfordshire County Council as there are lots of positive things happening within the borough.

It was noted that the Executive member will send an email to members updating them on the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP).

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

Members noted the update from the Service Director.

Meeting ended at 7.54pm
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