

Climate Change Sub-Group
17 January 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CLIMATE CHANGE SUB-GROUP held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Via Zoom

PRESENT: Councillors J.Weston (Chairman)

A.Hellyer, S.Kasumu, J.Lake, G.Moore, A.Nix,
P.Zukowskyj and M.Birleson

OFFICIALS K.Murphy, Climate Change Officer
PRESENT: O.Waring, Landscape and Ecology Manager
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager

23. APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Grewal.

The following substitution of Members was made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules:
Cllr Adrienne Nix for Cllr Rose Grewal.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

25. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 6

There were no items of urgent business.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest.

27. UPDATE REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Climate Change Officer introduced the report, advising the climate change action plan had been reviewed and there were no new actions although actions continued to be progressed. Specific project updates were provided as follows:

- Action 6 was to publish the climate change risk assessment, assessing in detail anticipated local impacts. The main local risks were hotter drier summers with greater potential for heatwaves; warmer wetter winters with greater potential

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flooding, and an increase in frequency of extreme weather. Following a robust review, the 61 individual risks prepared by the Local Government Association had been whittled down to around 25 local risks. These risks were then scored with control measures factored in; now the assessment had been completed, the next stage was to embed the resulting actions in order that the borough was as prepared for and resilient to climate change as possible. Climate change was being added to the strategic risk register alongside the existing climate mitigation risk.

- The Group was shown the Climate Change Risk Assessment which set out both risks and control mitigation measures. It highlighted additional actions which could be completed by the Council.
- A staff travel survey was completed in November 2023 and a completed Travel Plan had been produced to encourage sustainable travel options. A sustainable travel action plan was in place to support the Travel Plan.
- Action 38 was to calculate the Council's organisational and borough-wide carbon emissions at least annually to see if emissions were being reduced. Emissions were measured through a greenhouse gas assessment by Team Energy and this information was available on the Council's website. In 2023 the Council had emitted 2,104 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent; officers advised that the two previous reporting periods had been heavily impacted by the pandemic and had been an anomaly due to office closures. There had been a 16% reduction since the base year of 2019/20. There had been a steady decline since 2005 in terms of borough-wide emissions with a small increase in the most recent reporting period.
- Over 300 street trees were being planted this winter. 11,000 trees had been given to borough residents as part of the Our Tree Your Future scheme and it was hoped the scheme would run again next year.
- Landscape management plans for Singlers Marsh and Danesbury nature reserve had been consulted on and almost 85% of respondents agreed with the vision, aims and objectives set out in the plans; the plans would go back to Cabinet next month for final approval.
- Late last year, Hertfordshire County Council had conducted an audit on how the borough was addressing the climate emergency; they had been satisfied with their findings and had no recommendations which was positive.
- A climate action survey took place in November with one resident receiving a £30 voucher. There had been 678 respondents and 346 had wanted to sign up to a climate e-bulletin. The main action people had wanted to take was to reduce their meat intake, followed by walking or cycling more. The findings were helping facilitate the establishment of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Climate Hub, which aimed to develop mechanisms through which residents, business and stakeholders could be involved in progressing the climate action plan. The 2050 borough-wide net zero target was very challenging as the Council was not in control of wider emissions but its organisational carbon footprint was less than 1% of the borough-wide carbon footprint; the climate hub would help the target be reached through engaging and educating residents and supporting them to take climate action.
- Officers were working on a number of events to celebrate the Great Big Green Week in June.
- It was hoped that the first draft of the Transition to Net Zero document could be shared by the end of the financial year.
- The most recent round of the Solar Together scheme (the bulk-buying initiative for Hertfordshire homeowners) had 398 registrations of interest. The HUG 2 scheme which targeted energy efficiency upgrades for homes not connected to

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mains gas had had approximately 10 referrals to date; officers would continue to promote this.

- The Council had been awarded £3k from the Towards Net Zero carbon funding scheme which would support lighting in Mill Green Museum being LED.

Members made the following points:

- A member asked if risk of disease to trees had been considered given that temperature changes could change disease risk; he noted ash dieback had recently been problematic. Officers said they had been working with the county and districts; Welwyn did not have a lot of ash compared to other areas and had not planted it for a long time although they were keeping an eye on the situation. The member asked if particular diseases or pests were potentially problematic; officers said they factored in changes and planted trees that were more adaptable, for example.
- A member commended the report. She asked if the operational risk chart could be made available, and also asked if information about how emissions had reduced in the area could be made available. Officers advised this was online.
- A member asked whether funding came from the capital budget when there was planting in areas previously unplanted. Officers advised it was a mixture of the regular maintenance budget and also this year some grant funding from the local authority tree fund; some initial plots were also funded through S106 monies. The member queried whether funding was in place for all schemes the borough wanted to do; officers said they were committed to planting at least 300 trees per year, which had been met each year since the commitment was made. Planting this year had come from a combination of budgets with additional funding from the County Council.
- A member asked whether cycling to work could be promoted amongst Council staff and if incentive schemes could be used. Officers explained the Cycle to Work scheme offered employees a discount when buying a bike and the target for this would be increased subject to budgets. Officers were also looking to roll out active travel options and reduce single occupancy car travel. The member asked if there was a way of monitoring whether several people travelled together in a car for recreational purposes eg Campus West cinema in order to receive an incentive; officers said this would need to be explored.
- It was agreed the Climate Hub logo would be circulated to members of the group (*completed the day after the meeting*).
- A vegan market would take place in the borough run by the bid team, with staff on hand to talk about food waste and the Council's climate agenda. A member queried whether work would take place promoting food miles awareness. Officers confirmed that there would be other schemes and events which would take place to promote the Council's work on climate change.

Meeting ended at 8.10 pm