

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5TH APRIL 2017
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND
GOVERNANCE**

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises some of the work carried out by the Council to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. It also fulfils some of the Councils commitment to sustainability.
- 1.2 Climate change is a global issue but the effects take place at individual and local level. For example, extreme weather events of cold, heat, rain and wind have direct consequences on our residents and the borough.
- 1.3 We therefore have a moral responsibility as a public body to mitigate our contributions to climate change as well as a legal responsibility to ensure we have plans in place to respond to the negative impacts.
- 1.4 As with many aspects of our work there are additional benefits, commonly termed “added value”. This means that by taking a proactive approach we can also provide savings, improve employee health and well-being and improve productivity.
- 1.5 This report outlines the work of the Public Health and Protection team. We are also working with other teams within the Council to encourage identification of positive measures for mitigation and adaptations that could take place.
- 1.6 These actions cover a wide range of work and are discussed below.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the committee note the work undertaken by the Public Health and Protection Service.
- 2.2 For members to consider preferred reporting mechanisms for future update reports.

3 Explanation

3.1 Green Travel

The Council adopted a Staff Travel Plan (more commonly known as the ‘Green Travel Plan’) as a condition of the planning consent for the extension works to Campus East Offices. The base survey undertaken as part of this showed that around 80% of employees travel to work alone by car. A number of measures have been, or are in the process of being, implemented to try to address this:

- Pool bikes are available at Campus East so that employees may cycle on visits etc, rather than drive;
- An 'Employee Travel Club' has been set up with Arriva Buses to enable staff to purchase bus season tickets and an advantageous rate to encourage public transport use.
- A growth bid for two electric pool vehicles has been approved and these will be implemented within the next few months. The scheme will enable staff to use the cars for their duties during working hours, thereby enabling them to possibly travel to work using other means, while being able to make work journeys more sustainably. This will also save on mileage claims. The cars will be available to the public (through the car provider) out of hours in the form of a 'car club' scheme, thereby giving community access to these vehicles. Early discussions have been held with the provider with a view to them implementing a public access car club scheme in the borough, and also regarding the potential for 'greening' our fleet as it comes up for renewal.
- A cycle to work scheme has been introduced from December 2016. Staff can purchase a bike by means of 'salary sacrifice', the resulting tax and National Insurance savings effectively making the cycle purchase much more cost effective, with the council also saving on employers' national insurance contributions.
- The council actively promotes walking through awareness events such as 'Walk to Work Week' and a lunchtime walking group meets each Wednesday to encourage staff to take up more regular walking activity, with all the consequent benefits.

3.2 **Severe Weather**

Climate change also poses challenges in terms of resilience, with severe weather events becoming more common. The council has statutory duties to prepare and plan for, and respond to, emergency incidents within or affecting the borough under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and has:

- Joined the Environment Agency's (EA) 'Extended Floodline' service to enable flood calls to the EA to be dealt with more effectively. EA call agents are able to access a range of questions about WHBC's response to flooding during an incident without having to redirect callers to WHBC. Questions and answers can be dynamically updated by WHBC officers during an incident to enable a quicker and more effective response.
- Implemented a flood protocol so that advice can be given post event to affected property owners.
- Adopted a snow clearance plan so that once refuse collection is suspended during a snow event, resources can be redeployed to clearing access to certain WHBC sites (including sheltered schemes and neighbourhood shopping parades) after which resources can be used to clear town centre areas as requested by HCC.
- Each service has a business continuity plan, part of which includes the response to severe weather events.

3.3 Energy Efficiency

The Home Energy Conservation Act (1996) requires all Local Authorities to make plans to improve energy efficiency in all residential accommodation in their area and to report on activities and progress. Some of the activities being undertaken by the Council to achieve an improvement in energy efficiency are listed below:

- The Council commissioned the Building Research Establishment to carry out a modelling of Housing Condition in the borough. This model is interactive and can generate reports on specific areas in the Borough to identify housing with Low SAP Rating and where fuel poverty is more prevalent. This tool can be used to better targeting areas to promote schemes that may help residents to improve on energy efficiency of their properties.
- The Council is working in partnership with the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide a service to help households in fuel poverty. A Healthy Homes Advisor has been appointed at the CAB and works in closely with our Energy Officer to provide advice on how people can reduce their energy cost and consumption in their homes. Within this partnership there are many different services provided and this includes:
 - A full financial assessment of people referred to the service is carried out and how their energy cost and the impacts this have on the extent of their debt. General advice on debt management is given and also an assessment of their home in relation to how they can practically save on heating and lighting cost, while at the same time keeping their home warm and healthy is carried out and advised accordingly.
 - Advice on changing energy suppliers are given that can save households up to £150 a year. In many cases the advisor go through their previous bills to assess if savings can be made by switching suppliers. The advisor also assist by phoning energy suppliers to source the best tariff for the household and going through the contract that the suppliers are offering.
 - In many cases, it was found that people get into debt through energy suppliers using estimated readings of energy meters. Estimated readings are in most cases over estimated, which mean that the amount charged by energy companies are more than what the client has consumed. Customer's accounts can be in credit by several hundreds of pounds.
- Energy Suppliers are required to install smart meters in every home in the UK by 2020. Smart meters will give customers a true reading of the energy cost and will eliminate the need for estimated readings. We offer advice to the public regarding the benefits of having a smart meter installed. These meters provide information on how energy is consumed and how much it costs to run certain appliances, therefore helping the householder to better manage their energy consumption and their budget.

- In the past few years, a number of residents took up the “Green Deal” however the government has now decided to end the Green Deal bank and are currently in the process of carrying out consultation on how to improve the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) to tackle fuel poverty. We are hoping that a decision based on these recommendation will be taken soon. Unfortunately at the moment we are unable to direct households to any relevant sources of funding to assist them in carrying out essential energy efficiency works such as loft, cavity wall insulation, boiler and boiler control replacement.
- The Council is currently working with other Hertfordshire Authorities and Hertfordshire County Council to develop a partnership with energy suppliers to make use of ECO funding for energy efficiency works. If the funding is approved by ECO companies and we are able to proceed with this partnership, then we will be able to provide an update report if required by Members.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 The council has statutory duties to prepare and plan for, and respond to, emergency incidents within or affecting the borough under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- 4.2 The Home Energy Conservation Act (1996) requires all Local Authorities to make plans to improve energy efficiency in all residential accommodation in their area and to report on activities and progress
- 4.3 There are also duties placed on the Local Authority in respect of Health Protection matters under the following legislation: Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010, Health Protection (Local Authority Powers) Regulations 2010 and Health Protection (Part 2A Orders)

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 Individual measures and interventions may have costs implications and some of these schemes have been funded by outside organisations. Additionally, some of these initiatives may realise cost savings as a result of the reduction in energy costs.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:
- 6.2 There are reputational risks to the Council if the statutory duties under Civil Contingencies Act 2004, The Home Energy Conservation Act (1996), Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010, Health Protection (Local Authority Powers) Regulations 2010 and Health Protection (Part 2A Orders) are not upheld.
- 6.3 There are health risks to the public as a result of extreme weather conditions and emerging hazards and disease from climate change.

6.4 Risk to business continuity if the adverse impacts of climate change are ignored, staff unable to access the workplace due to extreme weather or illness or dealing with emergency incidents.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 None.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 Individual measures and interventions may have procurement implications and, where necessary, these are addressed through Contract Standing Orders as required.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 This report summarises the proactive work carried out to minimise climate change implications.

10 Link to Corporate Priorities

10.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority 'protect and enhance the environment'.

11 Equality and Diversity

11.1 Where necessary Equality Impact Assessments have been/will be carried out in connection with individual projects outlined in this report.

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