

Climate Biodiversity Cabinet Panel  
6 November 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CLIMATE BIODIVERSITY CABINET PANEL held on Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors H.Goldwater (Chair)  
J.Weston (Vice-Chairman)  
  
R.Grewal, G.Moore, S.Thusu and J.Cragg

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Max Holloway, Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Climate Change

OFFICIALS K.Murphy, Climate Change Officer  
PRESENT: R.Misir, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
O.Waring, Environment, Landscape and Climate Change Service  
Manager  
E.Walker, Assistant Director (Public Realm)

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22. APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Lass for whom Cllr Cragg attended as a substitute. An apology for absence was also received from Cllr Crofton.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024 were approved as a correct record.

24. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 9

There were no items of urgent business.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Cllr Thusu declared he was a member of Hertfordshire County Council.

26. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

There were no public questions or petitions.

27. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE REPORT

The Climate Change Officer took the Panel through the detail of the report. The following points were made during the discussion:

- A member commented that it had been anticipated there would be a local electric bus service but this had not transpired and he wondered how that impacted on what the Council was trying to achieve. Officers advised this was outside of their direct control given the bus companies were private but they could add it to their list of things to explore. The Chair noted one local bus service was due to become electric.
- A member asked about the cost effectiveness of working towards net zero. Officers noted the cost of not taking action could be higher than making proactive changes. Another member noted that some residents had been sceptical about the costs of climate action work and wondered if it was possible to provide costings of what that work was saving (such as reduced energy usage, for example). Officers said this would be a large piece of work but they could explore this, adding that some projects were not funded by the tax payer as the Council applied for available grant funding, and this could be referenced on the website. Another member observed that environmental impacts were never costed whereas although environmental projects would have upfront costs, they paid off further down the line; there were also co-benefits such as improved mental health as a result of access to green spaces. The Leader of the Council reflected that there was likely more that could be done in communicating the work of the Council, referencing by way of example a video it had produced that highlighted the investment it had made in changing the lights at Birchwood and associated carbon saving.
- A member drew the Panel's attention to the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was a major step forward in influencing sustainable development and went further than national policy legislation in terms of sustainability requirements. The six week public consultation period would start on 8 November 2024.
- A member asked what the driver was for the local reduction in air pollution. Officers understood it to be due to hybrid working post-pandemic but would check with Environmental Health colleagues.
- A councillor noted that local authorities in Hertfordshire were working on climate change issues and wondered if all the work was being quantified. Officers said measuring data could be challenging, particularly scope 3 emissions; they had data from DESNZ for borough-wide emissions, and the Council's organisational footprint was within the boundary it had defined. Welwyn Hatfield wanted to include as many scope 3 emissions as possible but needed proper data rather than estimates which was part of the challenge.

RESOLVED

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The Panel noted the progress of specific projects/ actions within the Climate Action Plan, which is the main tool used to monitor our pathway to net zero as an organisation (2030) and as a borough (2050) and note the wider co-benefits of such actions.

28. CLIMATE AWARENESS TRAINING

The Climate Change Officer introduced the report which recommended the introduction of a climate awareness training programme.

A member asked whether the training would be targeted towards Council tenants. Officers advised a strategy would be developed to promote the training which could feature in community engagement days and the Council's magazine for tenants.

A member noted the difficulties residents in flats could experience with recycling. Officers said new legislation would be coming in that related to recycling across all households which would afford more opportunities for people in flats to recycle.

A member queried how much money was available and officers undertook to provide the answer outside of the meeting. **Post-meeting note: The Climate Reserve Funds is currently £56k.**

The Chair asked officers to explain the benefits of the training. Officers responded that it provided people with a broad understanding of key environmental issues and highlighted behaviour changes that could be made. There were also potential cost savings through informing staff how to behave differently in the work environment who could then mirror those changes while at home. A member reflected on the importance of trying to change the culture of how people behaved in an organisation and she noted that also targeting the training at tenants was an organisational culture shift that the Council was working towards.

RESOLVED

The Panel approved a supplementary estimate of £3,650 for the purchase and implementation of climate and sustainability training, to be funded from the Climate Change Earmarked reserve.

29. TTNZ CONSULTATION

The Climate Change Officer introduced the report which outlined feedback from the Transition to Net Zero strategy consultation.

A member noted the mixed nature of the responses and wondered if specific work could take place to communicate the work the Council was doing in areas where it had influence. Officers said this could be discussed at the next Climate Officers Group and advised that one of the actions in the Climate Plan related to a communications strategy. A councillor noted the Council had previously

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informed residents about the positive impact of their recycling and how it helped the planet. Officers agreed this was something that could be done again which could perhaps feature in One Magazine and they would discuss this with the Communications Team.

A member noted the importance of involving young people and suggested schools and colleges could be included in similar consultations in future.

A member noted many residents were unable to use EV charging at home because of issues such as not having access to a driveway etc. and needing permission to have a gulley or dropped kerb, for example, and wondered if there was a way around that. Officers said that dropped kerbs were the County Council's responsibility. Sometimes trees were in the way of a potential EV charging point and Welwyn Hatfield would see they were protected. There would be more work to support more on-street charging for public use which was potentially the solution rather than for everyone to be able to charge outside their homes.

A member asked what would happen when electric car batteries stopped working as they were not recyclable friendly. Officers advised they followed the guidance of central government; adding that while electric cars were not a panacea they helped reduce petrol use and pollution.

#### RESOLVED

The Panel considered and noted the consultation results set out at Appendix B of the report and recommended the Transition to Net Zero Strategy (TTNZ) as set out in Appendix C of the report to Cabinet for approval.

Meeting ended at 8.15 pm