

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**MEETING HELD IN THE ROOMS 2/3, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,  
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY  
ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors Steve Jarvis (Chairman), Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Chairman), (Vice-Chairman), Val Bryant, Sam Collins, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Claire Strong and Kay Tart*

**In Attendance:** *Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Claire Morgan (Community Engagement Team Leader), Kei-Retta Farrell (Trainee Policy Officer), Lea Ellis (Assistant Community Engagement Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 30 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 12 seconds*

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 18 seconds*

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

**3 CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 58 seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment be noted.

#### 4 THE ROLE AND AIMS OF THE CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 17 seconds*

The Chairman advised that, when the Council declared a Climate Emergency, objectives were set including:

- Emission targets for Council;
- Developing a Climate Change Strategy.

The Cabinet Panel on the Environment was set up to maximise opportunities for input from interested organisations and residents.

There were, in his opinion, three main areas for the Council in respect of the Climate Emergency:

- Look at how the Council could reduce its own impact;
- Enable residents and businesses in the District to reduce their impact;
- How the Council can encourage people and business to reduce their impact.

The Chairman explained that he would ask those who had registered to speak to make their presentation, the Panel Members would then be given the opportunity to ask questions.

The Panel would then consider a work programme for future meetings.

#### 5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BALDOCK BEATS WASTE

*Audio recording – 7 minutes 14 seconds*

Ms Christine Watson, Baldock Beats Waste, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Baldock Beats Waste was a local group started due to the concern about misleading information regarding recycling, particularly single use plastic;
- Intention was to encourage people in Baldock to look differently at waste, particularly packaging and single use plastic;
- They advised on what could be recycled and when and where this could be done as well as alternative packaging;
- At meetings they demonstrated a selection of products and discussed where they could be bought;
- They had a Facebook page on which 100-500 people read posts regularly;
- They had held 3 meetings with 25-30 people attending;
- They had a stall at the Baldock Festival;
- They set up a collection of crisp packets at the local Community Centre;
- They had discovered some good practices by businesses and individuals in the Town;
- They had held 3 litter picking events
- They had visited local businesses to discuss waste management and have even been successful in changing the habits of some including:
  - Sought to change packaging at Baldock weekly market;
  - Archers Gym had been persuaded to stop using plastic bags;
  - Hollington Health had cancelled their order of bottled water and had started using compostable cups.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

In response to questions Ms Watson advised that:

- There were no plans for Baldock Beats Waste to become Plastic Free Baldock;
- However, should they meet the requirements for plastic free status, this would be a subsidiary of Baldock Beats Waste.

The Community Engagement Team Leader advised that a good way to share information was through Engage North Herts.

The Chairman thanked Ms Watson for her presentation.

## **6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - CLIMATE ACTION GROUP**

*Audio recording – 16 minutes 48 seconds*

Ms Rak Dimmock, Climate Action Group, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- The Climate Action Group had been set up to work as an alliance of campaign groups;
- Global carbon emissions had reached an all time high;
- If this was not reversed it would be catastrophic therefore we must act now;
- There was a widespread public concern about this issue;
- The Council was to be congratulated for backing the climate emergency;
- They urged the Council to move forward quickly;
- The immediate priority was to update the Climate Strategy in support of the goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030;
- Audits if carbon needed to be completed;
- They had invested a lot of time putting together a list of actions covering all areas of the Council's operations;
- If the Council does well in this area it will inspire other Authorities;

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

In response to questions Ms Dimmock advised:

- That an article in the Outlook magazine would make a big impact

The Chairman thanked Ms Dimmock for her presentation.

**7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PLASTIC FREE LETCHWORTH AND PLASTIC FREE HITCHIN**

*Audio recording – 28 minutes 20 seconds*

Ms Julia Sonander , Plastic Free Letchworth and Ms Anni Sander, Plastic Free Hitchin, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

Ms Sander informed Members:

- Letchworth had achieved Plastic Free Status and Hitchin was working towards it;
- Both towns had an abundance of festivals, coffee shops and take-aways;
- Single use plastic was a feature of these types of business;
- Compostable cups made of corn starch cannot be recycled in North Herts and therefore end up in landfill;
- Composting these products would require a whole new waste stream;
- Reusable products were better for the environment;
- Plastic Free communities proposed:
  - Produce and deliver on campaign to establishments that offer take-aways;
  - NHDC could loan reusable cups to events and charge a fee for washing and drying;
  - NHDC could work with BIDS to introduce a cup scheme.
- These proposals provided building blocks to move towards new ways of living.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Val Bryant;
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions Ms Sonander advised that:

- In respect of running events, a solution to in race water stations had not yet been found, however runners should be encouraged to bring their own water bottles for the end of the race.

Members comments included:

- That compostable processing could release carbon back into the atmosphere;
- That consideration could be given to a “scores on the doors” scheme regarding environmental awareness.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sonander and Ms Sander for their presentation.

**8 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - BEST BEFORE CAFE AND HITCHIN FOOD RESCUE**

*Audio recording – 43 minutes 49 seconds*

Ms Suzi Holding, Best Before Café and Ms Emma Goulding, Hitchin Food Rescue thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Best Before Café had saved more than 20 tonnes of food from supermarkets;
- They were fighting food waste and food poverty;
- Supermarket waste was only 2 percent of total food waste;
- 78 percent of food waste was residential;
- Food waste was harmful as rotting food turned into methane;

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- They were working with other charities and people to view best before food as edible by using it in a different way;
- They would like to see the Best Before model in every town, village and city;
- Their aim was to use food waste and educate people to use it;
- People needed to stop buying pristine food and start to use best before food.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Val Bryant.

In response to questions Ms Goulding advised that:

- Best Before Cafe and Hitchin Food Rescue had 250 people a week use their services;
- They were happy to be used to help conduct surveys;
- Schools did not undertake a lot of food waste separation.

Members comments included:

- There was a need to consider what education programmes NHDC could promote and/or deliver;
- On the continent people were penalised for not recycling.

The Chairman thanked Ms Holding and Ms Goulding for their presentation.

## **9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - HERTS WITHOUT WASTE**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 29 seconds*

Mr John Webb, Herts Without Waste, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Herts Without Waste was an advocate for transition towards reduced waste and a circulatory economy of materials;
- Greenhouse gasses was a large part of emissions;
- There were three main suggestions:
  - Minimise residual waste;
  - Local processing of waste;
  - Consistency of waste management.
- NB a written submission had also been presented.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

Members comments included:

- District Councils were responsible for waste collection and therefore had the power to influence people, but they could not do this alone.

The Chairman thanked Mr Webb for his presentation.

**10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NORTH HERTS AND STEVENAGE CLIMATE ACTION GROUP**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 10 minutes 46 seconds*

Ms Nicky Clark, North Herts and Stevenage Climate Action Group thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Where were the new green technologies such as public transport?
- The Climate Emergency had been declared, but when would it commence?
- The Council was doing some good things, but then allowed a concrete plant to be developed;
- The Hitchin Museum was designed around the sale of single use plastics;
- The Council needed to stop and take stock;
- People want to hear that things have changed, not that things were expected to;
- The first step was to accept that the problem existed;
- This was the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last that could do anything about it;
- Apathy and inaction of leaders leave us in a hedonistic decline;
- There was so much that could be done and it must be done now.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Kay Tart.

In response to questions Ms Clarke advised that:

- Information was key so the Council needed to communicate;
- Adults needed to be educated on how they deal with children and to take responsibility.

Members comments included:

- That the Council did not communicate enough.

The Chairman thanked Ms Clark for her presentation.

**11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TRANSITION TOWNS LETCHWORTH**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 24 minutes 20 seconds*

Ms Julia Sonander thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Panel as follows:

- Every town in North Herts should have a sustainable travel plan;
- For towns where there was not a Town Council a forum was needed to discuss issues and solutions;
- They had been working in Letchworth on a cycling plan;
- They had applied for funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Fund for a project about a modular road planning kit around school entrances. Although they had been unsuccessful they were keen to take this forward;
- Low carbon homes were needed and there was an opportunity in the Local Plan to consider what would be the best that could be achieved for new homes taking into account;
- The UK Green Building Council's Policy Play Book was a great resource;

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- Council's building on their own land would be able to ask for higher standards;
- Town Planning was important. There was an opportunity to review the Local Plan taking into account:
  - The climate emergency;
  - Revised housing need figures
  - Clarity from the Government regarding sustainable housing standards;
  - Incompatibility with LTP4:
- The Council should consider removing the least sustainable locations from the Local plan, taking into account the reduced housing need figures.
- NB Transition Towns Letchworth had also submitted a written statement.

The following Members asked questions and commented on the presentation:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Michael Muir.

In response to questions Ms Sonander advised that:

- Safe routes through towns for cycling and walking were needed.

Members comments included:

- That the sale of Council land for development should have a condition of sale regarding green development;
- Improving cycling and walking was actively being considered;
- There were some real issues about how much the Local Plan could be changed.

The Chairman thanked Ms Sonander for her presentation.

## **12 INFORMATION NOTE - PROPOSED GUIDANCE, WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER FOR 2019/20**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 42 minutes 6 seconds*

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the information note entitled Proposed Guidance, Work Programme and Action Plan and drew attention to the following:

- The guidance aimed to support the Terms of Reference of the Panel;
- There was a proposed Work Programme at Appendix B;
- It was suggested that the Panel keep an Action Tracker.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Kay Tart;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Kay Tart.

Suggestions included:

- That Executive Members be invited to relevant meetings:
- That emails from members of the public are circulated to all members of the Panel;
- Landscaping should form part of the planning application process;
- Street lighting was often not wanted in village and rural locations:
- Environment breaches should be investigated by NHDC;
- Need to talk about how tenants can work together with Housing Associations;
- The Council need to improve communication and enthuse people.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the proposed guidance be accepted;
- (2) That the work programme be amended as follows:  
Meeting 2 Planning (to include street lighting and decommissioning of solar farms);  
Meeting 3 Transport, Travel and Air Quality;  
Meeting 4 Waste, Recycling and Food Waste;  
Meeting 5 Greenspaces and Bio-Diversity (to include trees and landscaping);  
Meeting 6 Energy.
- (3) That the proposed action tracker be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.32 pm

Chairman