

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**MEETING HELD THIS WILL BE A REMOTE MEETING
ON TUESDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Steve Jarvis and Councillor Amy Allen (Co-Chairs), Val Bryant, George Davies, Sarah Dingley, Keith Hoskins, Gerald Morris and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir*

In Attendance: *Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager) and Georgina Chapman (Policy Officer), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Darryl Simmonds (CSC – IT Support)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

1 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

The Chair, Councillor Amy Allen, welcomed everyone to this virtual meeting of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer gave advice on the following:

- Attendance;
- Live streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Voting;

The Chair started the meeting proper.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 45 seconds.

Apologies for absence were received from Yvette Churchman, Morrison's Community Champion.

3 MINUTES - 23 FEBRUARY 2021

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 50 seconds.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer advised that due to a change in regulations the minutes of the meeting of the Panel on 23 February 2021 could not be approved but were attached for Members' attention only.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 27 seconds.

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chair 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.
- (4) The theme of this meeting would be the work programme for the coming civic year;
- (5) Due to staffing issues Item 7 on the agenda would not be presented tonight.

5 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 4 minutes.

There was no other business notified.

6 INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

Audio Recording – 4 minutes and 5 seconds.

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the Information Note entitled Work Programme and Action Tracker and drew attention to points including:

- The Panel discussed topics related to the environment and the Information Note was a standing item to update the public and the panel on the work of the Policy Team;
- The Policy Team had been making contributions to the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership;
- The Policy Team had instituted monthly eco-actions to encourage NHDC staff to adopt eco-friendly habits which are also included in NHDC's Insight and Now publications to reach residents;
- There was an Environment Panel inbox (EnvironmentPanel@north-herts.gov.uk) where members of the public could submit items for discussion at the Panel

RESOLVED: That the Information Note entitled Work Programme and Action Tracker be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION To ensure the Cabinet Panel on the Environment is able to plan its workload and monitor actions.

7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 8 minutes.

The Chair invited members of the public in attendance to present to the Panel.

N.B for clarity the content of presentations from members of the public and the resulting discussion is recorded at Minute 42 – Discussion Regarding Contributions to the Meeting.

8 DISCUSSION REGARDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MEETING

Audio Recording – 8 minutes 30 seconds.

The following members of the public asked questions and took part in the discussion:

- Anni Sander
- Roger Lovegrove
- John Webb

The following Members asked questions and took part in the discussion:

- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Adem Ruggiero-Cakir
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Amy Allen

In response to questions the Policy and Community Engagement Manager advised:

- The Council produces a bulletin on recycling and facilitates a number of Facebook groups on waste awareness and recycling;
- The Council's own website has pages on waste and recycling, home composting and food waste, and recycling of furniture and bulky items;
- The work programme item on composting and food waste disposal was to encourage home composting and wormeries;
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted work on changing waste collection schedules;
- While legislation was in place to facilitate anti-idling policies the local authority still had to apply for powers to enforce these policies.

Points raised included:

- Residents had to be encouraged to be mindful of their waste and consumption;
- Plastic Free initiatives were developing well in Hitchin and Letchworth and were discussing how to spread initiatives in to more rural areas and village settings;
- The problems of waste and refuse were more visible in towns but no less relevant to rural areas;
- Producer responsibility was important and waste minimisation was an essential priority;
- Many parish Councils had their own waste initiatives;

- Waste minimisation was linked to carbon in that less frequent refuse collections would lead to less carbon emissions; encouraging recycling was important but producing less waste entirely should be the goal;

The Chair led a discussion regarding contributions to the meeting and potential Panel themes for the civic year.

Points raised included:

- Items on the climate change strategy would make suitable themes for panel meetings;
- The Panel had a role to play in ensuring sustainable housing and building standards were adhered to in the Council;
- There should be a review of the sustainability of the housing proposals submitted under the local plan;
- Supplementary Planning Documents on sustainability in housing standards were part of the adopted Climate Change Strategy;
- The Climate Change strategy had two components and discussed areas where the Council had its own powers and where it had a leadership role in the community;
- The Council as a landowner could enforce certain standards on its properties but was constrained by planning regulations; as a leader in the community it could encourage developers and residents to expect the highest ecological standards;
- The Council could offer leadership and guidance on the issue of retrofitting houses to maximise sustainability;
- Passiv Haus standards and similar should become the norm for new houses built and provided improvements in cost, sustainability, and lived environment;
- The Cabinet Panel on Housing, Strategic Planning and Transport was better placed to consider specific issues relating to housing standards and planning;
- An energy generation scheme for the District was being investigated and good practice from other districts was being observed with HCC support;
- Renewal energy generation could feature as a panel discussion in future covering what the Council does with its own buildings and how to engage with the community on local energy generation;
- The Council was working on a Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan;
- There was a need for more public visibility of plans and discussions taking place around sustainable travel towns and efforts to change travel arrangements;
- It was sometimes unclear how the discussions of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment influenced policy changes and interacted with discussions elsewhere in the Council;
- The Cabinet Panel on the Environment had been integral to shaping the Climate Change Strategy and influenced policy on a number of issues;
- There was a lack of good news messaging and sharing the successes of climate change actions and policy development; progress was being made and if news of ongoing work was better shared fewer people would feel discouraged;
- The Council had a role to play influencing residents, the County Council, national government, and businesses; Councillors should feel empowered to engage with Climate Change issues outside of the specific legal powers of the Council;
- The Policy Team had taken note of discussion and would circulate a list of proposed topics for the coming year.

Tuesday, 8th June, 2021

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chair