

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



21 March 2025

Our Ref Cabinet Panel on the Environment 2 April 2025  
Contact. Committee Services  
Direct Dial. (01462) 474655  
Email. [committee.services@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@north-herts.gov.uk)

To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Amy Allen (Co-Chair), Mick Debenham (Co-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Bryony May, Claire Strong and Caroline McDonnell

Substitutes: Councillors Emma Fernandes, Lisa Nash, Paul Ward, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A**

**MEETING OF THE CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

to be held as a

**REMOTE MEETING**

On

**WEDNESDAY, 2ND APRIL, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson  
Service Director – Legal and Community

**\*\*MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL  
AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION  
ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING\*\***

## **Agenda** **Part I**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting.  Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES - 22 JANUARY 2025</b> To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 22 January 2025.	(Pages 5 - 10)
<b>3.</b>	<b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> <u>Climate Emergency</u>  The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 and helping local people and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions.  A Cabinet Panel on the Environment has been established to engage with local people on matters relating to the climate emergency and advise the council on how to achieve these climate change objectives.  A Climate Change Implementation group of councillors and council officers meets regularly to produce plans and monitor progress. Actions taken or currently underway include switching to green energy, incentives for low emission taxis, expanding tree planting and working to cut food waste.  In addition the council is a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, working with other councils across Hertfordshire to reduce the county's carbon emissions and climate impact. The Council's dedicated webpage on Climate Change includes details of the council's climate change strategy, the work of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment and a monthly briefing on progress.  <u>Ecological Emergency</u>  The Council has declared an ecological emergency and is committed to addressing the ecological emergency and nature recovery by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain whilst ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process.	

The Council has set out to do that by a) setting measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking to increase community engagement, b) to work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Hertfordshire and to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire and c) to investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities.

#### Declaration of Interest

Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.

#### **4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.

The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.

#### **5. INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25** INFORMATION NOTE OF THE POLICY & STRATEGY TEAM LEADER

(Pages  
11 - 24)

This note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting as well as a Work Programme and Action Tracker (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25. It also includes updates on sustainability work taking place within the council.

#### **6. DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FEEDBACK**

To receive a verbal update on the draft Sustainability Strategy feedback.

#### **7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

This page is intentionally left blank

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

MEETING HELD IN THE REMOTE MEETING  
ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 2025 AT 7.30 PM

#### MINUTES

**Present:** *Councillors: Amy Allen (Chair), Mick Debenham (Vice-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Bryony May, Claire Strong and Caroline McDonnell.*

**In Attendance:** *Georgina Chapman (Policy & Strategy Team Leader), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Ellie Hollingsworth (Policy & Strategy Officer) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 8 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

*Councillor Ian Albert was also present.*

#### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 37 seconds*

Apologies were received from Councillor Lisa Nash.

Having given due notice, Councillor Caroline McDonnell substituted for Councillor Nash.

#### 2 MINUTES - 9 OCTOBER 2024

*Audio Recording – 4 minutes 11 seconds*

Councillor Amy Allen, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 October 2024 were approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 53 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.

#### 4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording – 5 minutes 41 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

*N.B. Councillor Joe Graziano joined the Zoom call at 19:37.*

#### 5 INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

*Audio recording – 5 minutes 56 seconds*

The Policy and Strategy Team Leader presented the Information Note entitled 'Work Programme and New Proposed Action Tracker Template for 2024/25' and advised that:

- The second round of Solar Together had closed with a third round agreed for.
- As of December 2024, 1,665 Solar PV Installations on households across Hertfordshire had been completed.
- After contacting iChoosr in response to a question at the previous meeting, customers of the Solar Together Scheme could contact their installer and ask to have an emergency power supply fitted to allow for use of stored power during blackouts no matter the type of inverter as long as a battery system was used.
- The first draft of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy was ready and being shared with District Councils to get feedback.
- The first draft of the web platform was also finished, and user testing would begin on that soon.
- The Council had launched their ECO (Energy Company Obligation) Flex Scheme in January to make lower income and vulnerable households more energy efficient. The criteria for eligibility were listed on the Council's website and attendees were urged to promote this scheme.
- The Council had applied for the fourth round of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to decarbonise the District Council Offices, Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum.
- The Climate Hive engagement hub was available for all to use to keep updated on climate change and sustainability. In November, a Q&A session on recycling was provided by Councillor Amy Allen as Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Councillor Amy Allen
- Deolinda Eltringham

In response to questions, the Policy and Strategy Team Leader advised that they would contact iChoosr again to investigate the issue of the solar panel inverter only facilitating power for 1 electrical outlet.

#### 6 PRESENTATIONS

*Audio recording – 20 minutes 15 seconds*

The Chair invited Sian Hoare, the Operations Manager of Flood Risk and Adaptation at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to give a presentation on Flooding and Adaptation Work. Sian Hoare advised that:

- Flooding was experienced in Hitchin from 22 September with a flood warning issued on 27 September and removed on 5 October.

- Rainfall was long and intense which caused the small water courses that led to the river to become overwhelmed, creating significant fluvial and surface water flooding.
- Homes, businesses and infrastructure were affected with 20 properties flooded internally and a further 27 flooded externally.
- Local MPs and Councillors had supported the process to date.
- In response to the flooding, a drop-in session for residents was set up so that residents could report on what happened as well as express their feelings about flood risk.
- An assessment of assets along the River Purwell and clearance work were completed in partnership with the Council, the Environment Agency and the Internal Drainage Board to clear any obstructions along the river.
- The County Council had commissioned the National Flood Forum to work with the community in Hitchin to create a flood group that would eventually create a flood plan by working with the relevant partner organisations to draw up flood mitigations.
- A debrief event of the flooding took place in which officers from North Herts Council, the County Council and the Fire Service attended, and improvements to the response process were highlighted should the event occur again.
- Anglian Water assessed all their assets and looked at non-return valves in their manholes to reduce flood risk and carried out a clean-up of affected gardens.
- Monthly multi-agency meetings were taking place in which Anglian Water, the County Council and North Herts Council were meeting to discuss flooding, with updates published to the County Council website.
- A statutory Section 19 investigation was being undertaken to understand what happened and make recommendations to prevent future floods.
- Anglian Water had carried out several CCTV surveys of their network and identified areas of concern to be actioned.
- A review of national legislation would take place over the next year to address the strengths and failings of the Flood Risk Management Cycle and where changes needed to be made at a policy level.
- In terms of flooding adaptation, the County Council were working on this with partners at District Councils and water companies through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), which included developing a climate change risk assessment.
- The County Council as a pilot authority for climate change had been involved in the adaptation reporting power in which they reported on adaptation and how the County Council had been mitigating against the risks and impacts of climate change. This was a resource intensive process, but it had helped them to understand what to report on when it was actioned again in the future.

Sian Hoare then invited Lynne Ceeney, the Director of Sustainability at Hertfordshire County Council to present on Flooding and Adaptation Work. Lynne Ceeney advised that:

- The County Council were investigating the rules and regulations for the risk management authorities and trying to bridge the communication gaps between them to identify who was responsible as there was currently no community liaison in place when a flood occurred.
- All partners including the County, District and Borough Councils, the Environment Agency and water companies were working to agree on a standard operating procedure for flooding in Hertfordshire while they waited for national legislation to be devised.

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

- Councillor Joe Graziano
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Tina Bhartwas
- Councillor Bryony May
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell

- Councillor Mick Debenham

The following points were raised as part of the discussion:

- A question-and-answer document on flooding for members of the public to refer to.
- There was slow progress when dealing with multiple authorities and where to report flooding on the County Council website.
- Recurring problems with flooding in rural areas were slow to be addressed.

In response to questions and discussion points, Sian Hoare advised that:

- There was no hard deadline to apply for the Flooding Resilience Scheme in partnership with the Environment Agency, however it was recommended to apply for this as soon as possible as funding for this would be reviewed by the end of March.
- They were continually providing resources and education on the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and water companies, and they encouraged Members to send through questions that they had received from the public on flooding to help curate a frequently answered questions document.
- Based on varying reports from residents, the last flood in Hitchin was in 1980 but it was worth noting that the Environment Agency have never issued a flood warning in Hitchin before.
- The age of the properties flooded was not available at the meeting, but this information could be made available to attendees afterwards.
- River flooding could happen within an hour without warning, whereas ground water flooding was slower moving and could take place weeks after a rainfall event but was difficult to predict unless the ground water levels were monitored. However, they were working closely with North Herts Council and Parish Councils to monitor areas through photographs and conducting site visits to assess ground water flood risk on a weekly basis.

In response to questions and discussion points, Lynne Ceeney advised that:

- The County Council were actively investigating the issue of road run off and chalk stream contamination, however, due to outdated technology and road infrastructure, combatting this was a challenge.
- District and Borough Councils were being encouraged to help residents to form flood groups in areas they knew were susceptible to better prepare them for future flooding.
- Resources were prioritised where there was the most regular damage to key areas such as a single point of access or residents' properties, however it was encouraged to still report all flooding via the reporting tool on the County Council website. All reported issues would be investigated but not necessarily actioned.
- If persistent problems such as a faulty drain were not fixed immediately, it could be because the solution was complex such as a whole drainage run needing replacing which required time and organisation.
- Reporting flooding issues through County Councillors might help to get them actioned more quickly.

The Chair invited the Policy & Strategy Team at North Herts Council to give a presentation on Climate Adaptation Corporate Risk. They advised that:

- The idea that adaptation to climate change would remain an ongoing and consistent consideration as the climate continued to change had been added to the Corporate Risk management system at North Herts Council as a Service Risk.
- The management system enabled the Council to record, monitor and report corporate performance indicators, improvement actions, and risks.



- Although short-term failure to adapt to climate change would have a low impact on the Council, long-term failure would potentially bring bigger impacts that would need actioning.
- The current assessment of the risk was Medium, which meant that the likelihood was Medium, and the impact was also Medium on the risk management framework.
- Opportunities arising from the new risk included identifying the operations and services that were resilient to climate change, the added value of planned adaptations compared to the potential cost of inaction or immediate emergency responses, and being a leading example to local businesses and organisations to better prepare the whole district against climate change.
- In terms of consequences, the risk could increase the likelihood of business premises being out of action, failure to deliver services and projects, breached statutory duties, unbudgeted spend on emergency actions to respond to increased disruptive incidents around service delivery, and unmanageable demands on services and employees.
- In response to the risk, a Climate Officer Group had been established in addition to a Climate Risk Log which would identify possible service consequences and controls.
- Ongoing work in response to the risk included the consideration to build climate change impacts into corporate resilience arrangements and templates, the consideration of the resources required to respond to more potential emergency events and the impact of the involving numerous services and staff across the Council in these, the environmental implications considered for each committee report or key decision, and recognising the development of a new Sustainability Strategy to establish agreed objectives and actions.

## 7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

*Audio recording – 1 hour 3 minutes 50 seconds*

The Chair invited Julia Sonander of Decarbonise Letchworth to give a presentation on 'Updating the Letchworth Design Principles'. Julia Sonander advised that:

- Decarbonise Letchworth had launched a project where interested homeowners in Letchworth could provide in-depth feedback on the changes they would like to see made to the current Design Principles for Letchworth. They were in the process of compiling a draft for this feedback.
- They would like to see the Panel use its influence to help to upgrade the Design Principles which would help homeowners to achieve improved energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
- The updates they sought respected heritage but also recognised that housing stock had to evolve for changing weather, fuel poverty, resource depletion, energy security and the health of homes.
- In 2000, North Herts Council adopted the Design Principles into their Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Letchworth. However, the Heritage Foundation updated their Design Principles in 2009 and again in 2015 to incorporate character areas and Homes of Special Interest, creating a policy mismatch between the Council and the Heritage Foundation.
- The 25-year-old SPG and the 10-year-old Design Principles made it difficult for residents to install new technology in their homes such as heat pumps, car chargers, air conditioning, storage batteries and security installations. This also applied to external installations such as solar panels and external insulation which prevented improved energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
- Decarbonise Letchworth would like the Environmental Team to champion the suggested Design Principle changes that would improve the energy efficiency, energy security and health of housing stock in the town.
- They would also recommend that the Council updated their planning guidance to enable well-designed energy efficiency retrofits and the adoption of new low carbon technologies in conservation areas.

- They would further like the Council to consider the Draft Design Principles as the basis for an updated Letchworth SPG.

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

- Councillor Joe Graziano
- Deolinda Eltringham
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Georgina Chapman
- Councillor Claire Strong

The following points were raised as part of the discussion:

- It was queried whether there was a necessity to insulate a home with a large solar panel array, given the cheap energy that could be generated from solar.
- However, the importance of home insulation was highlighted as solar panels were intermittent in their production of power and there was usually a deficit in their production in winter regardless of the roof area of a home. It was further mentioned that future electricity demands would increase massively with the surge in demand for electric vehicles.
- The Council were in contact with the Sustainability Officer at the Heritage Foundation and they could consider adding to the action tracker subject to wording.
- The social housing standards to meet energy ratings meant that many houses had been knocked down and rebuilt in the past.
- Council officers were starting to update the design code to direct developers on their design of homes within strategic planning sites.

In response to questions and discussion points, Julia Sonander advised that:

- Solar panels alone would not harness enough energy to produce all the electricity demands of a home, and other benefits that external insulation provided to the health of homes would not be realised.
- Letchworth was approximately 30% social housing and the residents living in those houses would not have the means to take advantage of schemes and grants to make their homes more energy efficient or secure, therefore the Council should work with the Heritage Foundation to find solutions for this.

In response to questions and discussion points, Chris Jones advised that:

- The energy grid in general was becoming more volatile as more renewable energy sources were added to it, therefore practices that improved energy efficiency such as Fabric First were key to mitigating the consequences of this.
- The country had a carbon budget as part of its net zero targets which would affect the amount of construction that would take place in the future. Consequently, it was imperative to make progress to reduce carbon emissions and energy demands immediately.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Chair

## CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

### \*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

#### TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR: Environment and Leisure & Recycling and Waste Management

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

#### 1. SUMMARY

Panel Overview 2024/25

- 1.1 This note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting as well as a Work Programme and Action Tracker (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Panel aims to set a work programme which will enable open discussion that may lead to recommendations to Cabinet from the relevant Executive Members or Service Director, regarding actions that they believe the Council should be taking to address climate and environmental issues.

Panel Meeting: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will review achievements and progress on projects from the last year, as well as providing an opportunity to feedback on our draft Sustainability Strategy actions.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the Sustainability Strategy Actions at Appendix B are draft, and subject to change based on the consultation feedback.

#### 2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Cabinet Panel for the Environment at the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019 meeting. The amended terms of reference were tabled for the Full Council meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> June<sup>1</sup>. The Constitutional Amendment Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023<sup>2</sup> recommended that this Panel be the only remaining panel going forward.
- 2.2 By way of update to the Panel, we have been involved in the following work:
- 2.3 **Contributions to the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)**
- 2.4 The third round of Solar Together is now open and will remain open to expressions of interest until 4<sup>th</sup> April. As of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March, there have been 488 expressions of interest from residents of North Herts.
- 2.5 The Partnership have been working with MCS to develop a Retrofit Strategy for Hertfordshire as part of the Local Authority Retrofit Accelerator (LARA). We have participated in workshops to aid development of the Strategy and are now reviewing the draft.

<sup>1</sup> [Appendix B - Revised Terms of Reference for Cabinet Panel on the Environment.pdf \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Constitutional amendment report 18.4.23.docx \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

**2.6 Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

- 2.7 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are statutory spatial strategies which will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions to achieve these priorities. These strategies are legislated for in The Environment Act 2021. Development of the LNRS for Hertfordshire is being led by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), working in conjunction with the district councils and other stakeholders. The Strategy will contain a local habitat map and a written statement of biodiversity priorities. Engagement events were held during 2024, and the most recent engagement events were held in February 2025 to discuss the first draft. A recording is available to watch [here](#). There has also been engagement with landowners, farmers, and environmental experts on the draft. Work is ongoing to improve the first draft and public consultation will open later this year.

**2.8 Eco Flex Scheme**

- 2.9 We launched our ECO (Energy Company Obligation) Flex scheme in mid-January. We are working with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to support lower income and vulnerable households to make their homes more energy efficient. So far we have had three applications.

**2.10 Warm Homes**

- 2.11 We have been successful in our bid for funding from the new Warm Homes: Local Grant scheme. The scheme involves funding installation of energy efficiency measures (i.e. insulation) and low carbon heating (i.e. replacing old gas boilers with air source heat pumps) for low-income households living in hard to heat, poorly insulated homes. There will be a broader number of homes eligible for this scheme compared to HUG2 or ECO Flex. We have been allocated £1.5m over 3 years.

**2.12 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)**

- 2.13 The council has submitted an application for PSDS phase 4, for funding to decarbonise the District Council Offices, Hitchin Town Hall, and North Herts Museum. We expect to hear back if we are successful by May 2025.

**2.14 Climate Engagement**

- 2.15 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive, now has 407 subscribers, we continue to keep residents up to date on the latest surveys and consultations, eco events, national environment days, the Cabinet Panel for the Environment, and ongoing Local Nature Reserve Sites (LNRS) engagement.
- 2.16 From April, the Climate Hive will be provided on a different platform. Those subscribed will not need to re-subscribe to the new platform as this information will be transferred across, however anyone currently accessing the Climate Hive via a bookmarked webpage link should be aware that the link will change. We will notify subscribers of this on the current platform and the hyperlink on our [Climate Change](#) page will also be updated. The Climate Hive will continue to keep residents updated on action the council is taking and provide information on how residents can help towards our sustainability targets.

### **3. INFORMATION TO NOTE**

- 3.1 Our Environment inbox is a means for members of the public or organisations to provide suggestions/presentations for the panel's consideration. The address is - [EnvironmentPanel@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:EnvironmentPanel@north-herts.gov.uk)
- 3.2 The Panel could choose to accept suggestions from outside the meeting including:
- Suggestions by Members of the public or organisations either at the meeting or by email.
  - Recommendations from Council, Cabinet or any other Committee.
  - Suggestions by any Member of the Council.
  - Suggestions by any Officer of the Council.
- 3.3 The Panel will seek to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises additional burdens on staff resources. Wherever possible, requests are made for the presentation of documents already in existence rather than the production of new documents specifically for the Panel. Suggestions from outside sources, as detailed in paragraph 3.2 will only be placed on the work programme if agreed by one of the alternating Chairs or at a meeting of the Panel.
- 3.4 Attendance from external bodies and members of the public is actively encouraged.
- 3.5 This is a non-decision-making advisory body and therefore this or any notes/reports to the Panel do not include a recommendation on a key Executive decision and have not been referred to in the Forward Plan. However, recommendations for action from the Panel for consideration by Cabinet may do so. This will therefore need to be borne in mind for any recommendations of the Panel.

### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 Other topics for consideration and inclusion in the Panel's work programme will be considered at each meeting. Discussion will help ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

### **5. APPENDICES**

- 5.1 Appendix A – Work Programme and Action Tracker 2024/25
- 5.2 Appendix B – Sustainability Strategy Draft Actions
- 5.3 Appendix C – Achievements 2024/25 (to follow as a supplementary document)

### **6. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 6.1 Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team Leader, 01462 474121  
[Georgina.Chapman@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Georgina.Chapman@north-herts.gov.uk)
- 6.2 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Communities Manager, 01462 474212  
[Reuben.Ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Reuben.Ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk)
- 6.3 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy & Strategy Officer, 01462 474220  
[Ellie.Hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Ellie.Hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

**APPENDIX A – WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2024/25**

**PROGRAMME FOR CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT MEETINGS 2024-25**

<b>Meeting 1. 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024</b>	<b>Setting the scene and work scoping</b>
<b>Meeting 2. 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b>	<b>Sustainability SPD and national government plans for climate and environment</b>
<b>Meeting 3. 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025</b>	<b>Climate Adaptation and Flooding</b>
<b>Meeting 4. 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025</b>	<b>Draft Sustainability Strategy Actions</b>

# **CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT – ACTION TRACKER**

Action Number	Action	Objective	Team/Individual Responsible	Timeframe	Measurable	Status
1	Contact iChoosr to query inverter type and use of stored power during a power cut.	To resolve a query around inability to use stored power from system during a power outage.	Policy & Strategy Team Leader	To be completed by 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2025	Response from iChoosr	Complete (see Information Note for 22/01/25 meeting for response. <a href="#">Webpage</a> also updated with info).
2	Review the asks of Decarbonise Letchworth regarding retrofitting and Supplementary Planning Guidance; ascertain whether NHC can help progress action; ascertain NHC plans for SPDs and design guidance and communicate these to the group.	To help Decarbonise Letchworth progress retrofit in Letchworth Garden City.	Policy & Strategy Team Leader	To be completed by 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2025.	Communication to Decarbonise Letchworth.	Ongoing



Action Number	Action	Objective	Team/Individual Responsible	Timeframe	Measurable	Status

This page is intentionally left blank

## Emissions

### **Aim: Achieve Net Zero by 2030 for the council's own operations.**

Our 2030 target includes emissions from our buildings, fleet and key contracted services (waste, leisure and green space). These are the areas we have either ownership or the greatest control over through direct management or close management of these key council services. Of the emissions we currently assess, this accounts for 90.4% of emissions.

For our wider emissions footprint, we will aim to be Net Zero by 2040 in line with our district target. This includes emissions from staff commuting, staff working from home, spend on goods and services, our own waste and water use. Of the emissions we currently assess, this accounts for 9.6% of emissions. However, there are gaps around understanding emissions from our wider spend on goods and services, such as IT and smaller contracts, as well as understanding emissions related to our leased out estate. As part of this strategy we will assess emissions related to these areas before taking actions to reduce these emissions to achieve Net Zero by 2040.

Nº	ACTION	THEME
1	Deliver decarbonisation of key council buildings, particularly the council offices and Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum, and utilise heat decarbonisation and assessment management plans to prioritise future projects and deliver a net zero estate.	1) Councils own emissions
2	Optimise council's own estate energy consumption to use and occupation to maximise efficiencies and reduce emissions.	1) Councils own emissions
3	Finish transition of council's own fleet to fully electric by 2030.	1) Councils own emissions
4	Deliver significant decarbonisation of our three leisure centres by March 2026.	1) Councils own emissions
5	Explore options for low carbon heating of Lidos with plan to transition to low carbon heating once boilers reach end-of-life after 2030. Actively manage the sites to reduce energy consumption.	1) Councils own emissions
6	Implement use of sustainable low carbon fuels in heavy duty refuse collection vehicles and wider measures to reduce fuel consumption and associated emissions from our waste collection service from 2025/26.	1) Councils own emissions
7	Work with our contractor to transition the green space service contract fleet to fully electric, if feasible, and to fully electric machinery by 2030.	1) Councils own emissions
8	Reduce staff commuting emissions through measures to support take up of electric vehicles, and encourage walking, cycling, and use of public transport.	1) Councils own emissions
9	Identify opportunities for reducing emissions from staff business travel through consideration of schemes including lift sharing and EV car clubs.	1) Councils own emissions
10	Assess emissions from spend on goods and services. Work with the Contracts Procurement Group to identify and act on priority areas for action to utilise procurement to reduce	1) Councils own emissions

	emissions, including embodied emissions of goods and materials.	
11	Estimate emissions associated with leased buildings, and deliver works required to ensure all commercial properties owned by the council are at least compliant with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards – at present and in the future.	1) Councils own emissions
12	Provide climate change training and regular engagement for staff and councillors.	1) Councils own emissions
13	Develop council position about offsetting unavoidable emissions to meet 2030 net zero goal that supports local emissions reductions.	1) Councils own emissions
14	Publish annual reports of progress towards the council's emissions targets from 2025.	1) Councils own emissions
15	Produce roadmap towards 2030 net zero target and for the council's wider emissions beyond 2030 in 2025/26.	1) Councils own emissions
<b>Emissions</b> <b>Aim: Achieve a Net Zero North Herts district by 2040.</b> The key sources of district-wide emissions are: transport, heating in people's homes, and commercial and industry. We have limited tools available to drive action to reduce emissions across the district ahead of the UK as a whole but can use our role as the planning authority, our convening powers and being a trusted voice to help support action.		
Nº	ACTION	THEME
16	Expand and improve EV charging in council owned car parks	2) District emissions
17	Further expand provision for EV charging across the district in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council	2) District emissions
18	Identify/secure funding to implement improvements to cycle and walking infrastructure across North Herts and update the plan to incorporate rural connections	2) District emissions
19	Promote independent advice and / or service and schemes to support residents to retrofit their homes, install low carbon technologies, or reduce their energy usage.	2) District emissions
20	Promote and deliver government funded grants to retrofit fuel poor homes	2) District emissions
21	Utilise Tenants Charter and enforcement of minimum energy standards to drive improvements in housing to reduce fuel poverty	2) District emissions
22	Explore providing support for businesses to take up low carbon technologies and reduce their emissions, including consideration of grants or sharing of good practice	2) District emissions
23	Strive where possible for developments on land sold by the council to be Net Zero operational in line with the council's 2040 goals, with monitoring of embodied emissions.	2) District emissions

24	Work with partner councils to develop local area energy planning capacity, including identification of options for viable district heating systems	2) District emissions
25	Support growth of community energy in our area, particularly promotion of town or area specific projects to improve rates of installation of low carbon heating and energy efficiency measures in our district	2) District emissions
26	Develop design guidance that promotes low emissions in travel and operational use for our major housing developments to support our net zero goal	2) District emissions
27	Produce good practice case studies for development in the district aligning to the gold and silver standards of the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document to inspire others	2) District emissions
28	Integrate consideration of district wide net zero and climate adaptation goals in local plan development process.	2) District emissions
29	Identify further funding streams to support retrofit of North Hertfordshire building stock and wider low carbon activities, including from major developments in our district	2) District emissions
30	Utilise new waste collection service and associated communications and engagement to drive improvements in household recycling rates, reaching 60% in 2026/27	2) District emissions

### Adaptation

**Aims: Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change**

**Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change**

*Adaptation involves adjusting our lives, environment, work, and communities to changes we face today and in the future, due to climate change. We're already seeing its effects through extreme weather events like floods, heatwaves, and intense storms, impacting supply chains, council services, staff, and residents' health. We must prepare for these risks and adapt accordingly.*

*The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership prioritises adaptation; we've contributed to the adaptation subgroup action plan, assessed climate risks, and helped develop a county-wide risk register and adaptation plan.*

Nº	ACTION	THEME
31	Signpost residents and businesses in the district to data and resources relating to climate risks and potential impacts, to help best adapt to and mitigate against the changing climate. For example, how to prepare homes for extreme weather, retrofit opportunities, reducing risks of	3) Adaptation

	overheating, flood defences, permeable driveways and mitigating flood risks.	
32	Engage with water companies and communicate advice on water usage reduction to residents and business.	3) Adaptation
33	Signpost communities to cool and warm spaces across the district and work with Hertfordshire County Council to update the map of locations available.	3) Adaptation
34	Establish learnings from the ResilienTogether project and apply to our own sites within North Hertfordshire.	3) Adaptation
35	Explore the feasibility of providing cool and warm spaces in Council owned buildings during seasonal demand.	3) Adaptation
36	Record extreme weather events and incidents to enable a monitoring process to record the impacts on our council services, assets and district as a whole.	3) Adaptation
37	Establish learnings from emergency volunteer work to aid response to emergency events including from extreme weather.	3) Adaptation

## Biodiversity

### Aim: Increase biodiversity in North Herts

*Biodiversity is defined as the variety of plant and animal life in an area, or in a particular habitat, with a high level of variety or diversity generally considered beneficial.*

*In 2023 NHC declared an Ecological Emergency to show recognition that nature is in crisis, that the climate and ecological emergencies are interlinked, and that we have a duty to act to protect nature.*

*As of January 2024 there is a biodiversity duty upon local authorities to consider what they can do to both conserve and enhance biodiversity. They must subsequently publish policies/objectives/actions. They must first report progress on these in 2026.*

Nº	ACTION	THEME
38	Work in partnership with the Wildlife Trust and others to make improvements to North Herts Council sites, and rivers and chalk streams.	4) Biodiversity
39	Continually review opportunities to deliver the aspirational elements of site-specific Greenspace Action Plans; and review and consider additional aspirations as each plan comes up for renewal (e.g. using s106/BNG money to deliver)	4) Biodiversity
40	Review the success of implementing the greenspace wildling audit recommendations; and seek and implement further recommendations from Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW).	4) Biodiversity
41	Make it a priority for river projects to support suitable habitat for water voles; where possible,	4) Biodiversity

	support the Wildlife Trust's aspiration to reintroduce water voles into Purwell.	
42	Explore options to landscape an area of Wilbury Hills Cemetery and incorporate more biodiversity	4) Biodiversity
43	<p>Review the impact of our reduced mowing regimes, and consider management amendments at the appropriate point in the Greenspace Management contract to help increase species diversity.</p> <p>- Provide communications to residents about the reasons for this and the impacts.</p>	4) Biodiversity
44	Engage with resident groups and provide information on the wider benefits of reduced mowing regimes in areas where this leads to complaints.	4) Biodiversity
45	Identify opportunities to harness the power of volunteers to achieve shared goals around increasing nature	4) Biodiversity
46	Review the finalised version of the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to identify if there are opportunities to contribute to the priorities identified.	4) Biodiversity
47	Work with colleagues from social housing providers to find opportunities to incorporate nature-positive actions into ongoing work e.g. adding Swift bricks to houses which are being retrofitted.	4) Biodiversity
48	<p>Make full consideration of Biodiversity within the Local Plan Review process including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploring the possibility of a target above the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for development within North Herts.</li> <li>- Considering the allocation of Nature Networks.</li> <li>- Asking landowners to put forward potential areas for open space and nature.</li> </ul>	4) Biodiversity
49	<p>Review council-owned land to ascertain whether we have sites which may be suitable for biodiversity projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wildflower areas and rewilding</li> </ul>	4) Biodiversity

	- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) offsetting from development	
50	Review the opportunity and feasibility of creating a habitat bank using council estate to sell biodiversity units to developers who need to offset required BNG.	4) Biodiversity
51	Support prospective habitat banks which are in accordance with Local Nature Recovery Strategy aspirations in securing legal agreements to enable access to the Biodiversity gain register.	4) Biodiversity
<b>Nº</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>THEME</b>
52	Annual internal communications and engagement to reduce other sources of the council's emissions with wider environmental benefits, such as the council's waste produced and water consumed.	5) Cross-cutting
53	Develop and deliver public facing communications and engagement plan to support residents to act sustainably	5) Cross-cutting
54	Continually review opportunities for the museum to host exhibitions on climate change, nature and sustainability	5) Cross-cutting
55	Explore introduction of water-saving measures at allotments to reduce hosepipe and sprinkler usage.	5) Cross-cutting
56	Identify potential areas that would benefit from cooling (e.g. on walking or cycling routes or in parks) and conduct a feasibility assessment to ascertain whether trees could be planted to provide the required shading.	5) Cross-cutting
57	Consider how we can ascertain the value of green-infrastructure and nature-based solutions through assessments of council sites to determine best value and best use.	5) Cross-cutting
58	Continue to engage with partners on nature recovery and nature-based solutions to adaptation in the district, for example The North Chilterns Partnership, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Hertfordshire County Council.	5) Cross-cutting