

14 January 2025

Our Ref Cabinet Panel on the Environment 22
January 2025
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Amy Allen (Co-Chair), Mick Debenham (Co-Chair),
Tina Bhartwas, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Bryony May, Lisa Nash and Claire Strong

Substitutes: Councillors Emma Fernandes, Caroline McDonnell, 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, 22ND JANUARY, 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**

| Item | | Page |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | 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. | |
| 2. MINUTES - 9 OCTOBER 2024 | To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 9 October 2024. | (Pages 5 - 8) |
| 3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS | | |
| | <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 AND STRATEGY TEAM LEADER

(Pages 9
- 18)

The Information Note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting, the Work Programme and Action Tracker (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25, and an update on the climate and sustainability work going on within the council.

6. PRESENTATIONS

To receive presentations from the following:

- 1) Flooding and Adaptation Work – Sian Hoare, Operations Manager: Flood Risk and Adaptation (Herts County Council)
- 2) Climate Adaptation Corporate Risk – Ellie Hollingsworth & Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team (North Herts Council)

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

MEETING HELD IN THE VIA ZOOM
ON WEDNESDAY, 9TH OCTOBER, 2024 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Mick Debenham (Chair), Amy Allen, Tina Bhartwas, Dominic Griffiths, Bryony May and Claire Strong.

In Attendance: Georgina Chapman (Policy & Strategy Team Leader), Deborah Coates (Principal Strategic Planning Officer), Omar Ezzet (Strategic Sites Planning Officer), Ellie Hollingsworth (Policy & Strategy Trainee) and Sjanet Wickenden (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer).

Also Present: At the start of the meeting 6 members of the public were present.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 31 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Graziano.

Councillor Lisa Nash was absent.

11 MINUTES - 17 JULY 2024

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 44 seconds

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2024 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

12 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 24 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.

13 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 7 seconds

There was no other business notified.

14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 14 seconds

The Chair confirmed that members of the public were in attendance and would participate in any discussions related to Agenda Item 6.

15 INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME AND NEW PROPOSED ACTION TRACKER TEMPLATE FOR 2024/25

Audio recording – 4 minutes 31 seconds

N.B. Councillor Dominic Griffiths joined the Zoom call at 19:41.

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

- The Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) had been approved by Cabinet in September 2024 and this would be discussed later in the meeting.
- A new action tracker had been formulated following feedback from previous meetings and this included SMART actions, which had not been included on the previous action plan.
- The action tracker would include items with an anticipated completion date and would confirm ownership of the item.
- Members could suggest items for the action tracker, by contacting the Policy team or through the Chair at the wash up meeting.
- The action tracker would be discussed at every meeting and could lead to items being recommended to Cabinet.
- Successful engagement events had been held for stakeholders and residents regarding the Local Nature Recovery Scheme led by Hertfordshire County Council. Phase 2 of the project would commence in autumn 2024 with a draft strategy ready for March 2025. During the winter months there would be online engagement with stakeholders in Hertfordshire.
- Stage 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme was expected to be completed by the end of October 2024. Surveys have been completed and consultants will commence a review of the planning pack prior to applying the Heritage Foundation guidelines.
- Parish Councils and local groups had been encouraged to apply for funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Grant Panel meetings considered applications last week and successful applicants would be advised and notices published as Delegated Decisions.

The Policy and Strategy Officer advised that:

- The second round of the Solar Together scheme had closed, and installations had been finalised. In total 104 installations had been completed in North Herts and 514 installations in Hertfordshire.
- The Hertfordshire Growth Board had launched their 'Sustainable County' mission with a specific focus on developing an energy plan for Hertfordshire. A working group would be formed shortly.
- The Retrofit guidance document was now available, and a link was sent to attendees in the group chat.

- The Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) closed at the end of September 2024 and aimed to improve the EPC rating of homes in fuel poverty.
- There were now 380 subscribers to the Engagement Hub and updates were sent out on a regular basis.
- The presentation included as Appendix B was presented at the latest Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) meeting and highlighted the key priorities for the new government.
- The focused objectives of GB Energy were to produce clean energy and reduce greenhouse gases. £8.3 billion had been invested by the government with £600M allocated to local authorities.
- There were five functions of GB Energy, one being the Local Power Plan, a scheme for renewable energy projects in the local community with commercial assistance and this was detailed in Appendix B.
- The restriction on onshore wind farms had been lifted, and the upcoming reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) were aimed at supporting green energy and the environment.
- There had been permission granted for three new solar farms with associated infrastructure and grid access.
- There was a housing target of 1.5 million new homes over the term of parliament.
- There was funding of £6.6 billion to reduce fuel poverty in collaboration with local authorities, similar to that of the HUG2 scheme.
- There were plans to create three new national forests in England with the expansion of nature rich environments and woodlands.
- Skills England had set up a new partnership with employers and an aim to reform the apprenticeship levy.

The following members of the public asked questions:

- Deolinda Eltringham
- Roger Lovegrove

In response to questions, the Policy and Strategy Team Leader advised:

- That the inverter information would be feedback to iChoosr the distributor for the Solar Together project and would be covered in the Solar Together closing report.
- The three new solar farms were agreed at a national level rather than by North Herts Council.
- There were plans to review the Climate strategy, and dual-sided, raised solar panel farms could be considered then.

The Strategic Sites Planning Officer presented an item entitled 'Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)' and advised that:

- The document was linked to the Local Plan, particularly policy SP1 and was not intended to have any increased financial burden on developers.
- The draft had been subject to a six-week public consultation in January 2024.
- There were 89 representations received from the consultation from 17 different individual and from organisations. The majority of the representations were supportive of the SPD and the objections related to costs and areas where further clarification was required.
- The feedback included a request for further information regarding the requirements of the benchmarks and for alternatives to Passivhaus and the Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETi).
- Following the consultation the draft was reviewed and repetitive information removed.
- The document had been divided into eight broad themes which were aligned to the North Herts Council design code.
- Individual household extensions were exempt from the SPD.

- The SPD included a glossary and a list of acronyms.
- There was an explanation of the three standards, Bronze, Silver and Gold for each of the eight broad schemes and this was available in the background papers at 6.2 of the report.
- It was deemed that bronze was the current expected standard.
- The SPD had been reviewed by external consultants.
- There had been minor changes to the NPPF since the SPD was drafted.
- Each of the eight themes had their own checklist for standards.
- The standards were the same for residential and commercial developments.
- Developers who achieved higher standard would be reviewed more favourably.
- Information regarding the standards of each development would be published on the Council website.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Roger Lovegrove
- Deolinda Eltringham
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to a question the Strategic Sites Planning Officer advised that there had been interest from existing developers who wanted to achieve silver or gold standard on their sites.

In response to questions the Principal Strategic Planning Officer advised that:

- It may be viable for the Churchgate project to achieve the silver and gold standards, and this would be explored alongside the Enterprise team.
- Whilst the SPD could not dictate that a developer complied to their standards, it was expected that prospective house buyers would seek properties built to a higher standard.
- The SPD would be included in the new Local Plan and complied with government legislation requirements.
- The SPD would not fix all problems but went some way to solve some issues.
- The SPD was adopted by Cabinet in September 2024.
- The SPD would form part of the planning application process.
- The Planning Control Committee would be made aware of the intended building standards for each of the eight areas when considering planning applications.
- The standards would also be publicised on the planning portal and on developers marketing advertisements.

The meeting closed at 8.22 pm

Chair

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
22 January 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE POLICY AND STRATEGY TEAM LEADER

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: 22nd January 2025

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will provide an update on the new risk added to the Council's Corporate Risk Register: Climate Change Adaptation. As of November, a new risk covering Climate Change Adaptation has been added to the Council's Corporate Risk management system. The system enables the council to record, monitor and report corporate performance indicators, improvement actions and risks.
- 1.4 There will also be a presentation on recent flooding in North Hertfordshire, particularly in the Hitchin Walsworth Area, from the Operations Manager: Flood Risk and Adaptation at Hertfordshire County Council. The presentation will also touch on the work around climate adaptation that is currently taking place.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Cabinet Panel for the Environment at the 27th June 2019 meeting. The amended terms of reference were tabled for the Full Council meeting on the 4th June¹. The Constitutional Amendment Report of the 18th April 2023² 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 second round of Solar Together is now closed. 185 households in North Herts accepted their solar pv recommendation. The price achieved for the average 14-panel

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

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

system within this scheme is 34% cheaper than the typical market price for an equivalent system according to iChoosr's market research. As of December 2024, 1,665 Solar PV Installations across Hertfordshire have been completed.

2.5 A third round has been agreed for Solar Together and further information will be shared in due course. A query was raised at the previous meeting of the panel about being able to use power from installations during power cuts, and types of inverter used to enable this. We have raised this with iChoosr who have explained that inverters do not allow or prevent an individual from using electricity during a power blackout, as that is not their function. However, it is possible to have an emergency power supply (EPS) attached to a solar battery which will allow for use of stored power during a blackout. The type of inverter used in the system will not impact whether an EPS can be installed. Customers of the Solar Together Scheme can contact their installer or iChoosr to find out more about getting an EPS installed. We have updated the Frequently Asked Questions section of the [webpage](#) to reflect this.

2.6 The Hertfordshire Growth Board have now launched their missions, one of which is Sustainable County. Sustainability is also mentioned within several of the other missions. The HCCSP is referred to in the missions and given a specific remit around developing a local area energy plan for Hertfordshire. A working group will be formed for this shortly.

2.7 **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

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. Key identified stakeholders are helping develop specific strategic priorities for Hertfordshire's urban areas. These priorities aim to join up fragmented habitats, provide wildlife corridors, improve greenspaces, and help improve air quality. North Herts are currently assisting in providing information to help shape these urban priorities and incorporate the priorities into the LNRS map. The first draft of the web platform for the finished LNRS is completed and is going through refinement to make it easy-to-use for all, with user testing beginning in the new year. Further details on future engagement opportunities will be available under on the HNRP website under 'Get involved'.

2.8 **Eco Flex Scheme**

2.9 We will be launching our ECO (Energy Company Obligation) Flex scheme during the week commencing 13th January. We will be working with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to support lower income and vulnerable households to make their homes more energy efficient. More details including the eligibility criteria will be published during the week commencing the 13th January.

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

2.11 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.

2.12 **Climate Engagement**

- 2.13 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive now has 402 subscribers, we continue to keep residents up to date on the latest surveys, eco events, national environment days, the Cabinet Panel for the Environment, ongoing Local Nature Reserve Sites (LNRS) engagement, sustainable Christmas tips and surveys/consultations. We ran a Q&A engagement with the Exec Member for Recycling and Waste Management throughout the month of November and received a lot of questions, answers have been posted on the Climate Hive.
- 2.14 We 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
- 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 new Action Tracker Template 2024/25
- 5.2 Appendix B – Climate Adaptation Risk

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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

APPENDIX A – WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2024/25

PROGRAMME FOR CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT MEETINGS 2024-25

| | |
|--|---|
| Meeting 1. 17th July 2024 | Setting the scene and work scoping |
| Meeting 2. 9th October 2024 | Sustainability SPD and national government plans for climate and environment |
| Meeting 3. 22nd January 2025 | Climate Adaptation and Flooding |
| Meeting 4. 2nd April 2025 | TBC |

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 nd January 2025 | Response from iChoosr | Complete (see Information Note for 22/01/25 meeting for response. Webpage also updated with info). |
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Climate Change – Adaptation Risk

As of November, a new risk covering Climate Change Adaptation has been added to the Council's Corporate Risk management system as a Service Risk. The system enables the council to record, monitor and report corporate performance indicators, improvement actions, and risks.

The risk covers the idea that adaptation to climate change will remain an ongoing and consistent consideration as the climate continues to change. While the short-term failure to adapt services to the changing climate may have a low impact on the organisation, the failure to adapt over the long term brings bigger potential impacts to the organisation which need to be acted on.

The current assessment of the risk is 5 – Medium, Medium. This means the Likelihood is Medium and the impact is Medium on the risk management framework.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 7 | 9 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 |
| 1 | 3 | 6 |

The risk identifies opportunities and consequences to Council services. These include;

Opportunities:

- Operations and services that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Added value of planned adaptations compared with the potential cost of inaction or having to implement immediate emergency responses.
- Leading by example to local businesses/organisations, so that the district as a whole is better prepared.

Consequences with increased likelihood of:

- Business premises being out of action e.g., due to flooding.
- Failing to fully deliver services/projects.
- Breaching statutory duties.
- Unbudgeted spend on immediate emergency actions to respond to an increase in disruptive and concurrent incidents, to ensure continued service delivery.
- Unmanageable demands on services/employees.

Work Completed in relation to the risk includes:

- Established a Climate Officer Group.
- Creation of a Climate Risk Log identifying possible service consequences and controls (current and potential controls).

Ongoing Work:

- Consideration of climate change impacts built into corporate resilience arrangements/templates.
- Consideration of the resources required to respond to a potentially increasing number of emergency events, recognising any response (and recovery) is likely to have an impact across the Council and require the involvement of numerous services and staff (links to corporate Resilience Planning and the existing Risk Register entry relating to a failure to respond effectively to an emergency.)
- Environmental Implications considered for each committee report/key decision.
- Development of a new Sustainability Strategy to establish agreed objectives and actions.

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