

27 September 2024

Our Ref Cabinet Panel on the Environment
9 October 2024
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Amy Allen, Mick Debenham, 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

a Virtual meeting

VIA ZOOM

On

WEDNESDAY, 9TH OCTOBER, 2024 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	<p>Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting.</p> <p>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.</p>	
2. MINUTES - 17 JULY 2024	<p>To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 17 July 2024.</p>	(Pages 5 - 10)
3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS		
	<p><u>Climate Emergency</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
	<p><u>Ecological Emergency</u></p> <p>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.</p>	

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. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

6. INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME AND NEW PROPOSED ACTION TRACKER TEMPLATE FOR 2024/25 INFORMATION NOTE OF THE POLICY AND STRATEGY TEAM LEADER

(Pages
11 - 28)

This note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting as well as a Work Programme and new proposed Action Tracker (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

MEETING HELD AS A REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM
ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH JULY, 2024 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Amy Allen, Mick Debenham, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Bryony May and Claire Strong.*

In Attendance: *Georgina Chapman (Policy & Strategy Team Leader), Ellie Hollingsworth (Policy & Strategy Trainee), Caroline Jenkins (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lees (Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 6 members of the public, including speakers.*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 42 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tina Bhartwas.

Councillor Lisa Nash was absent.

2 MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2024

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 12 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 20 March 2024 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 59 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) The Chair advised of a change to the published agenda order and Agenda Item 5 would follow Agenda Item 7 and Agenda Item 8 would follow Agenda Item 9.

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 109 minutes 03 seconds

The Chair invited Sue Lines to address the Panel, and Ms Lines advised that:

- There were missed opportunities to involve groups and residents in the process to address climate and sustainability issues.
- Previously roadshows had taken place to engage regular people with actions ongoing and changes they could make.
- It would be helpful to know what was being done to help ordinary people who did not have the funds to participate in some of the able-to-pay schemes that the Council had run, such as Solar Together.

In response to the points raised, the Policy and Strategy Team Leader advised that:

- Support for lower income families to retrofit homes has centred around funding available from central government, as the Council does not have the budget to support this.
- There were several current schemes being run which would support lower income families to make their homes more energy efficient and the Panel would be kept updated on these accordingly.

6 INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

Audio recording – 4 minutes 59 seconds

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

- The Panel was established in 2019 with an aim to set a Work Programme which would encourage discussion with the public, who could share ideas with Officers and the Panel could refer these on for consideration.
- There were several projects which the Council had ongoing, alongside the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and these would be discussed throughout the meeting.
- The North Herts Prosperity Fund, part of the Shared Prosperity Fund, had been established and agreed at Cabinet earlier in 2024, with £210,000 to support parish and community projects. Criteria had now been developed for applications to this fund and was now open for applications through to 1 September 2024.
- An allocation of funding had been made separately for unparished areas, such as town centres.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Joe Graziano
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Bryony May
- Diane Ketcher

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

- A discussion had taken place on the future of the Solar Together scheme, and it was proposed that the Council would not take part in the next round in autumn as the uptake for the second round was lower than the first. It was hoped that a cooling off period would increase interest in uptake of the scheme.
- The Home Upgrade Grant applied to the income of a household. A request had been made to increase the level of household income at which residents would be able to access the scheme to £39,000, but this was refused as it was made part way through the scheme.
- Information provided verbally was covered in the reports pack from the meeting and further information would be provided in presentations throughout the meeting, with slides circulated afterwards.
- Discussions had been held between Officers regarding the roll out of the EcoFlex scheme and the resources required to support this, as well as what documentation was required. It was expected that this would move forward over the next few weeks.
- Organisations who had already received funding from the Council for other projects would likely still be able to apply for further funds from the North Herts Prosperity Fund, but this would be confirmed, and the full criteria circulated to Members.
- The application period was normal for this type of scheme and the application was straightforward, with broad criteria which groups could meet.
- Funds allocated must be spent by the groups by March 2025.
- The Community / Partnerships team would monitor applications and, should it be required, the deadline could be extended. However, there had already been applications received, and further discussions with potential applicants, and so it was unlikely the scheme would be undersubscribed.
- It would need to be explored whether BIDs could make applications to the Prosperity Fund scheme.

The Chair advised that Morrisons also had funding available for registered charities for up to £10,000 to support community schemes.

7 INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY WORK AT THE COUNCIL

Audio recording – 26 minutes 18 seconds

The Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager, the Policy and Strategy Team Leader and the Policy and Strategy Trainee provided a presentation to introduce Members to the climate and sustainability work ongoing at the Council.

The Policy and Strategy Trainee advised that:

- The Council had declared both a Climate and Ecological Emergency and set out actions which needed to be taken to address these.
- There was a commitment to place environmental responsibilities at the centre of policymaking at the Council, and this meeting would focus on this area, rather than financial sustainability.

In response to a question from Mr Roger Lovegrove, the Policy and Strategy Team Leader advised that the Sustainability SPD was not specifically on the agenda, but that a work scoping item was, and the SPD could be discussed as part of that.

The Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manger advised that:

- His role was to pick up some actions contained within the tracker and ensure that these were worked on, and implemented, where possible.

- Most actions at the Council are driven by the Climate Change Strategy, which had three main focusses, taking action on the Council emissions, enabling actions to support residents and communicating and engaging others.
- An Officer group had been established to ensure cross-Council representation, feed into strategic work and to identify gaps in current policies.
- This group included representation from key areas, such as Property Services, Planning, Enterprise and Community/Partnerships.
- A major source of emissions from the Council was the leisure centres in the district and several actions had been taken to address this.
- Any changes in nation planning policy would be reflected in the SPD when adopted.
- Changes had been made to the fleet at the Council and this was now predominantly electric vehicles, with infrastructure also installed to support this.
- The Green Spaces team, along with contractors, had been implementing policies across the district, including the introduction of bee corridors.
- The Solar for Business pilot scheme had been introduced and it was hoped that 5 businesses would sign up to this initially.

The Policy and Strategy Trainee advised that:

- The North Herts Climate Hive was established in March 2023, and was a platform to update residents and Officers of ongoing relevant actions, funding streams and sustainability tips.
- Monthly briefings were provided to the Executive Member, and this was shared through the Members Information Service (MIS) and at the Staff Consultation Forum (SCF).
- Further internal updates were provided through the Hub, new starter inductions and as sessions delivered as part of ongoing Officer development.
- That Council had been successful this year with a £7.7million bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to decarbonise the leisure centres in the district. This scheme would include replacing existing boilers with air source heat pumps, retrofit energy efficiencies measures and installation of solar panels. The project was expected to be completed by March 2026.
- A review of the Climate Strategy was started following the all-out elections in May 2024 and the new 4-year administration, to encompass other areas including ecological and biodiversity concerns.

The Policy and Strategy Team Leader advised that:

- There were three arms relating to biodiversity, biodiversity duty, biodiversity net gain (BNG) and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), all of which were required by the Environment Act 2021.
- Since January 2024, the Council had been required to consider what can be done to enhance biodiversity, not just conserve it.
- The Council was now required to publish objectives, policies and actions around this, and regular reviews are required, with the first review due in 2026.
- BNG requires developers to leave the environment in a better state than before development and needed to make a 10% net gain and applied to major developments from February 2024 and minor developments from April 2024.
- Net gains must be legally secured for 30 years.
- Some biodiversity would need to be offset off-site, as it will not be possible to develop net gain onsite, and in the worst case developers can purchase credits from national government, but these were not priced competitively to discourage this option.
- Herts County Council have established a site matching service, so that developers can review available sites for BNG.
- It would be possible for off-site BNG to be provided outside the district of the development, though the aim was to keep this as local as possible.

- The LNRS was a strategy to deal with nature recovery in a comprehensive way, looking at all aspects of nature, and was being led by County Council with support from districts and other stakeholders.
- The HCCSP was established in 2020 and comprises of the County Council, as well as all the district Councils within Hertfordshire, with an aim to drive changes across the county regarding Climate Change and Sustainability actions.
- The Hertfordshire Growth Board works with residents, communities, public sector organisations and businesses to achieve sustainable growth in the county.
- One of the new 6 missions of the Board was 'Sustainable County' and the HCCSP had a specific role in supporting this aim.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Diane Ketcher
- Sue Lines
- Roger Lovegrove

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

- There was no current policy regarding solar panels, but clarified that SPDs could not create policy themselves, but needed to strengthen existing policy.
- Developers would need to develop agreements with Councils to support the maintenance of sites identified for BNG.
- Consultation had not yet taken place with social housing providers regarding the installation of solar panels on their stock.
- A successful bid was made by settle previously to complete retrofitting measures on their housing, but this was more focussed on reducing waste.

Councillor Joe Graziano proposed a topic for a future meeting could explore the cross boundary issues with access to household refuse sites, which were now restricted by county boundaries, with rural residents needing to travel further afield to attend a tip.

8 REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT PANEL ACTION TRACKER

Audio recording – 130 minutes 00 seconds

The Policy and Strategy Team Leader led a review of the Environment Panel Action Tracker and advised that as this was a new civic year, the Policy and Strategy team would review the tracker and its presentation to make it more actionable and measurable.

Councillor Claire Strong suggested that items included which do not have direct actions should be removed altogether.

9 WORK PROGRAMME SCOPING FOR THE PANEL FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio recording – 119 minutes 21 seconds

The Policy and Strategy Team Leader led a discussion with the Panel regarding the Work Programme and possible topics for future meetings, which could also be provided outside of the meeting via email.

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

- John Webb
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Roger Lovegrove

The following points were raised during the discussion:

- Hertfordshire had a responsibility for many of the chalk streams in the world and the protection of these and whether funding could be sourced from central government or international organisations.
- An application had been submitted for Oughtonhead by Affinity Water to build a nitrate filtration plant and extract water from the site. This needed to be monitored and any impacts on the River Hiz identified.
- Oughtonhead was one of only two locations in North Herts where fresh water can be collected from the surface.
- A review of communications to be produced to support the new waste contract would be a useful piece of work for the Panel to conduct.

The meeting closed at 9.43 pm

Chair

**CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
9 OCTOBER 2024**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME AND NEW PROPOSED ACTION TRACKER TEMPLATE FOR 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 new proposed 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: 9th October 2024

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will provide an update on the Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was approved by Cabinet in September. The update will highlight the key content of the SPD, the implications, and how the SPD developed since it was brought to this Panel for comment while it was in draft. The meeting will also include a run-through of the new national government's plans around climate and environment.
- 1.4 At the previous meeting we agreed to review the action tracker for this panel to make it more effective. The actions which currently populate the tracker, are not, in their current form, SMART actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based). Some have remained on the tracker for long periods of time due to being ongoing actions which have no clear completion point. We are proposing to archive all actions in their current form and begin a fresh action tracker using a new template (at Appendix A). This template will enable the recording of SMART actions. Additionally, we propose to hold a wash-up meeting with the chairs after each Panel meeting to identify whether any SMART actions can be added to the tracker based on the meeting discussion and to aid monitoring. This tracker will then be brought back to the Panel each meeting. This will allow the Panel to fulfil its aims to provide meaningful recommendations to Cabinet.

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.

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 \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

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 system within this scheme is 34% cheaper than the typical market price for an equivalent system according to iChoosr's market research. As of mid-June 2024, 540 Installations across Hertfordshire have been completed.

2.5 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.

2.6 Work towards compiling the county wide retrofit guidance has finished, with the guide due to be published on the HCCSP website very soon.

2.7 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2.8 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. HCC has proposed that each district host a LNRS stakeholder engagement event over the summer and has asked districts to suggest venues and build a list of local stakeholders who we can promote the event and broader engagement opportunities to. We have begun building our stakeholder list which so far includes Councillors, Parish and Town councils, BIDs, schools, community groups such as Friends Of groups, our regular Environment Panel attendees, as well as mailing lists including the Green and Growing Network. We have also included larger organisations such as the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and the Environment Agency. We welcome any suggestions from the panel as to who else should be included on the stakeholder list. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to feed in their knowledge about local nature to help shape priorities for nature recovery. A series of LNRS Engagement Events were held across the county throughout July for people to engage and learn more about the work on LNRS. This included an event at Hitchin Town Hall. The events proved successful, with good attendance and engagement, with over 300 stakeholders engaged both via surveys and at the in-person events. Two webinars were also held in August for further engagement. Phase 2 will commence in the Autumn with online sessions with wider stakeholder groups to identify priorities and projects.

2.9 Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)

2.10 The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 closes to applications at the end of September. . The scheme aims to provide free home improvements to those at risk of fuel poverty by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes. There has been a recent change in the eligible income threshold. Applicants previously had to have a household income of below £31,000 per year, but this has been amended to £36,000 to increase the number of eligible applicants. This was following lower than expected uptake levels across the country. A bid to further amend this threshold to increase the amount of successful applicants was unfortunately unsuccessful. The scheme is available for off-gas properties with an EPC rating of D, E, F, or G. We have completed mailouts to the key target areas of Hitchwood, Offa, and Hoo; Weston and Sandon; and Ermine.

We have also had social media posts ‘boosted’ to key postcode areas. Posters and leaflets are available to anyone who would like to promote the scheme in their local area. More information about the scheme and how to sign up can be found on our webpage. [Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home-upgrade-grant-phase-2)

2.11 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

2.12 The work is continuing to progress the project to decarbonise our leisure centres under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The project will be completed by March 2026 and aims to save 1,176 tonnes of carbon each year.

2.13 Climate Engagement

2.14 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive has now been running for over a year and has proven successful so far in engaging with and updating residents around climate and sustainability topics. The Hive had just over 100 subscribers in March 2023 and now has over 380.

2.15 Since its launch we have provided updates on energy efficiency schemes, sustainability tips and products, local events, details for the cabinet panel on the environment, weather adaptation information, green skills, ways to help nature, a number of county-wide surveys and lots more. We have engaged with residents through discussion topics on reaching our net zero targets and finding out what contributions residents are making towards climate action.

2.16 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.

2.17 North Herts Prosperity Fund (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)

2.18 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) was originally Launched by DLUHC in April 2021 as part of the government’s commitment to level up all parts of the UK. The SPF was to provide funding to every English and Welsh District and Unitary Authority over three years from April 2022 to April 2024. North Herts Council submitted an Investment Plan in July 2022 to access the allocation of £1,499,525.00 for the three-year period. The final third year funding allocations were agreed by at a Cabinet meeting on the 19th March 2024 and included £210,000 for a North Herts Prosperity Fund, designed to be used for parish and community projects.

2.19 Parish councils and community groups were able to apply for funding for a range of projects, including projects that relate to sustainability and environment. This included community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects; creation of and improvement to local green spaces; support for active travel enhancements; impactful volunteering and/or social action projects; capacity building and infrastructure support amongst local groups; community engagement or local regeneration schemes; and relevant feasibility studies. A number of applicants proposed projects which would improve sustainability.

2.20 The fund has now closed for applications and the team have completed the review and scoring of applications. Successful grant applications will be notified of award following the Grants Panel on the 3rd October. For more information please visit: [North Herts Prosperity Fund | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/prosperity-fund)

2.21 Westminster Update

2.22 An APSE representative presented at the latest meeting of HCCSP and updated members and officers on some key updates from central government. This included detail on the Warm Homes Plan, Great British Energy, Planning and Biodiversity matters. The presentation can be found at Appendix B.

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 – APSE Presentation, Westminster Update

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 [Cabinet Paper 10th September 2024: Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)

6.2 [Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)

7. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 7.1 Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team Leader, 01462 474121
Georgina.Chapman@north-herts.gov.uk
- 7.2 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager, 01462 474212
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- 7.3 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy & Strategy Officer, 01462 474220
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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	TBC
Meeting 4. 2nd April 2025	TBC

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT – ACTION TRACKER

Action Number	Action	Objective	Team/Individual Responsible	Timeframe	Measurable	Status

Westminster Update

How will the new government take sustainability and climate change matters forward?

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James Jefferson, Principal Advisor, APSE Energy

Key priorities set out by DESNZ

- Delivering the mission to boost energy independence and cutting bills through clean power by 2030;
- Taking back control of energy with Great British Energy;
- Upgrading Britain's homes and cutting fuel poverty through the Warm Homes Plan;
- Standing up for consumers by reforming the energy system;
- Creating good jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, including a just transition for the industries based in the North Sea;
- Leading on international climate action, based on domestic achievements.

Great British Energy

- The Great British Energy bill outlines that its objectives will be to facilitate, encourage and participate in –
 - a) the production, distribution, storage, and supply of clean energy;
 - b) the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from energy produced from fossil fuels;
 - c) improvements in energy efficiency;
 - d) measures for ensuring the security of the supply of energy.
- GB Energy will involve £8.3 billion of public money to be invested over the parliament, including £600m in further funding for local authorities.

Local Power Plan

- The Local Power Plan makes up one of Great British Energy's 5 functions.
- It will partner with and provide funding to support local and combined authorities and community energy groups to rollout small and medium-scale renewable energy projects.
- It will aim to crowd in investment, with a focus on ensuring that project benefits flow directly back into local communities.
- Further support will also be provided in the form of commercial, technical and project-planning assistance, to increase the capacity of local authorities.

Planning

- Moving quickly with the lifting of the ban on onshore wind in England, opening up the possibility for council owned wind turbines.
- Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, including chapter on “Supporting green energy and the environment”
- Approval of 3 new solar farms and talk of a ‘solar rooftop revolution’.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is expected to accelerate upgrades to the grid and streamline the planning process for major infrastructure projects such as solar and onshore wind.
- Mandatory housing targets will be restored, with the target of building 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament.

Warm Homes Plan

- £6.6 billion in government investment over the next parliament.
 - Aim to reduce fuel poverty through to upgrading five million homes to cut bills for families.
- In collaboration with local authorities, the Warm Homes Plan will: “offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation and other improvements such as solar panels, batteries and low carbon heating to cut bills.”

Biodiversity

- Establish three new National Forests in England, whilst planting millions of trees and creating new woodlands
- Labour will expand nature-rich habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests

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Skills

- Government will establish Skills England - new partnership with employers via Skills England Bill and reform of the apprenticeship levy.

Key comments from APSE Energy's post-election roundtable

- How will future funding for technologies be delivered?
- When will GB Energy be operational?
- What will be the scope for the Warm Homes Plan? Will it cover social housing and if so, how will this funding be delivered?
- Will the Warm Homes Plan have an impact upon the Local Authority Retrofit Scheme?
- Are there any plans for changes to the allocation of future funding opportunities? Is there potential for combined authorities to play a role in distributing at the local level?
- How can local government ensure that central government appreciates the level of expertise and experience in the sector and how the sector can bring that to bear at government level? Is there potential for local authority representatives to be included in government technical working groups?

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