

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM
ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Amy Allen (Chair), Emma Fernandes, Bryony May, Paul Ward and Donna Wright.*

In Attendance: *Faith Churchill (PA - Director Governance), Robert Filby (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Daisy Harris (Policy & Strategy Officer), Ellie Hollingsworth (Policy & Strategy Team Leader) and Amber Smith-Howell (Policy & Strategy Officer).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 17 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 04 minutes 45 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Caroline McDonnell.

Councillors Joe Graziano and Claire Strong were absent.

9 MINUTES - 1 JULY 2026

Audio Recording – 04 minutes 59 seconds

Councillor Emma Fernandes proposed and Councillor Paul Ward seconded and, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 1 July 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

10 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 06 minutes 28 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 informed those present that the theme for this Panel meeting was 'A discussion on the National Emergency Briefing' and that speakers were in attendance to present on topics related to this at Agenda Item 6.

11 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 07 minutes 08 seconds

There was no other business notified.

12 INFORMATION NOTE: COUNCIL ACTIVITY UPDATE AND ACTION TRACKER

Audio recording – 07 minutes 13 seconds

Officers from the Policy and Strategy Team provided a verbal update on the Information Note entitled 'Council Activity Update and Action Tracker' and advised that:

- Documents relating to 24 different areas of sustainability had been produced with other authorities in Hertfordshire as part of work on Local Government Reorganisation.
- There had been a 36% reduction in non-recyclable waste since the waste service change a year ago.
- Screenings of the People's Emergency Briefing (PEB) had been shown across the district over the summer, and locations for future screenings could be found on the National Emergency Briefing website.
- There were plans to offer a PEB screening to Officers and Members to improve their understanding of the climate crisis.
- A consultation on the Content and Evidence Base for the Local Plan, including a map of sites submitted for development, would take place from 13 October until 24 November 2026.
- A survey had been launched by the Green Space Team on the Council website on the use of parks and green spaces to help preserve and improve facilities.
- Green Space were also exploring water harvesting and recycling on allotment sites to reduce the use of water.
- A page on community energy had been put on the Council website with contact details for local groups and how to get involved.
- An EV staff salary sacrifice scheme had been introduced for Officers to help the Council to reduce its staff commuting emissions, and a staff survey had also been launched to understand staff community behaviours and identify actions to be taken from these.
- A mandatory green procurement checklist had been put in place to enable sustainability to be proportionally embedded into project procurements.
- The Government funded Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme continued to be delivered by the Council with installations delivered to 12 homes in fuel poverty in year 1, and installations planned for a further 30 homes in year 2.
- The North Herts Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, which incorporated sustainability in several forms had been published on the Council website.
- Internal communications related to sustainability continued to be promoted to staff to further their understanding of climate change both in their roles and personal lives.
- Carbon Literacy training, in addition to the internally developed sustainability e-module had also been promoted to staff and 93% had completed this.
- Ideas for presentations or topics at future Cabinet Panel meetings should be submitted to the Environment Panel inbox.

The Chair thanked the Policy & Strategy Officers for their presentation.

13 PRESENTATIONS

Audio recording – 13 minutes 34 seconds

Members of North and East Herts Community Resilience Group (NEHCRG) provided a presentation on the People's Emergency Briefing (PEB), 'Take the Jump' (TTJ), Community Resilience and Food Security, and advised that:

- TTJ was a global science-based initiative that spread a positive message on how people could take 6 shifts to bring the impact of their lives within planetary boundaries.
- It was recognised that individuals could only influence 27% of the action required to keep temperatures within habitable limits, but this could be used to empower people.
- The 6 shifts were to eat green, travel fresh, make stuff last, change the system, stay grounded and grow community.
- There were also five key foundations which were that trying was enough, everyone was in it together, joy was gained from surroundings, everyone had the same access to TTJ but different responsibilities, and actions would impact carbon both nationally and globally.
- Community, creativity, celebration, and other values were far better than consumption.
- TTJ aligned well with the Sustainability Strategy of the Council and supporting it would mean any future climate related policies would be better received.
- The Council were asked to provide a screening of PEB, which they had already agreed to do, and adopt TTJ as a public engagement tool and make it prominent in their communications.
- Empty supermarket shelves, reservoirs running dry and forest fires were unimaginable a few months ago, but it was now possible that the UK would have food supply shortages.
- NEHCRG was set up last autumn, and five aims were established for the group which were to build community, communicate the crises, influence local decisions, influence national decisions and build resilience at home.
- Building community was about talking to others to help them understand that they were living in a climate emergency and to act responsibly together.
- Communicating the crises took place through monthly meetings, social media, community events, and working with organisations like the Council and its Cabinet Panel.
- Influencing local decisions meant encouraging councillors and officers to view the PEB and be committed to environmental issues.
- Influencing national decisions meant lobbying MPs with their concerns and ideas.
- Building resilience at home would be done through sharing ideas and providing information to help establish food and water emergency provisions.
- Professor Tim Lang had produced a report that warned how unprepared the UK food system was for geopolitical, climate and supply chain shocks.
- The report contained a seven-step framework to learn from other countries, assess public perceptions and trust, map community assets, empower local authorities, create a local food resilience committee, develop a coherent national food policy and shift from a just-in-time model to a just-in-case one.
- Mapping community assets, empowering local authorities and creating a local food resilience committee would require local authority involvement as there was no statutory or financial framework in place to do these.
- The National Security Assessment had been published by the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in January 2026 warning of global ecosystem collapse and biodiversity loss, that would pose severe risks to the environment, public health, domestic food security and geopolitical stability.
- The Council were requested to write to the Government requesting the necessary statutory framework and financial framework to develop local food resilience.

- The Council were also requested to write to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to request that they do the same.

In response to points made during the presentation, the Chair advised that:

- They would be happy to propose a motion at a future Full Council meeting to request the Council to write to the Government as the district was a water stressed area.
- It would be better for NEHCRG to approach HCC separately about writing to the Government rather than the Council lobbying HCC on their behalf.
- TTJ was a positive campaign with small changes that could make a big impact, and they would be happy to see the Council adopt elements of this.
- Advertising for PEB screenings in the district had already been done by the Council.
- The public were too used to having immediate access to all food items all the time, and stocking up for periods should be more normalised.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Councillor Emma Fernandes
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Gilly Chegwyn
- Roger Lovegrove
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Christine Watson

In response to questions, Members of NEHCRG advised that they would be delighted to provide TTJ cards to Members, which detailed the 6 shifts.

In response to questions, the Chair advised that:

- Community energy was something they could do without the Government.
- Constructing solar farms was great for land use as it helped to regenerate soil, generate renewable energy and preserve land from development for years.
- The Council and HCC were part of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and the Hertfordshire Climate Change Sustainability Partnership, but it was unknown what actions HCC were taking on resilience and food security.
- The Cabinet Panel had its own action tracker, and this would be updated accordingly after the meeting.
- Most surplus food from supermarkets was fresh food made on the day.
- Although it was recognised that some people had dietary and health requirements, running out of certain products should be normal for supermarkets and more accepted by the public.
- Supermarkets had the responsibility on how they stocked their stores and the Council could not enforce what people ate.
- Promoting the Climate Hive through communication channels was something they were agreeable to, but the most effective approach would need to be determined with Officers.
- The Council could only control advertising within their channels and facilities.

In response to points raised during the presentation and questions, the Policy & Strategy Team Leader advised that:

- The Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and an Ecological Emergency in 2023.
- In response to those declarations, the Climate Change Strategy was created, which had subsequently been developed into the Sustainability Strategy, and progress updates on the actions in this would be published on the website in due course.

- The Cabinet Panel had also been set up in response to the declarations, and good progress had been made by the Panel since its inception in 2019.
- A Green and Growing Network was operated by the Community Partnerships Team, with regular meetings and information sharing sessions and anyone interested in this was encouraged to join.
- A webpage on allotments was available on the Council website, and anyone interested should apply for a plot, although immediate availability was not guaranteed.
- Awareness of Food Futuring had been raised through sustainability briefings on the Council website, and their surveys on food resilience and local food in Hertfordshire had also been promoted by the Council. A presentation had also been received from them at the Hertfordshire Climate Change Sustainability Partnership.
- Updates on food resilience would be provided once more was known on this.
- The Council already had a Resilience Team involved with climate change risk assessments and resilience issues.

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

- Roger Lovegrove
- Gilly Chegwyn
- Vicky Wyer
- Sue Lines

The following points were made as part of the discussion:

- The National Emergency Briefing (NEB) was far more comprehensive than the PEB, and all Officers involved with climate change and sustainability should watch this
- Council Officers should reference the resources on the NEB website.
- The Climate Hive should be promoted more to the public if possible.
- It was clear that the climate and ecological emergency was going to get serious very quickly and people needed to be informed of this as soon as possible.
- Only being able to view the PEB with others rather than alone was intentional so that people could discuss what they had viewed with others.
- It was important to promote the PEB as the Government had not done anything on this yet, which had fuelled disinformation on climate change.
- Climate change myth busters should be put onto the Council website.
- There was a campaign called 'Right to Grow' to grow food on wild unused public land, which would require infrastructure, but the first stage of this would be a resident-led audit on the amount of public open space available for this.
- The Council needed to interact with the public more and use their contacts to encourage wider action on sustainability and climate change.
- Members, Officers and members of the public were encouraged to attend the next NEHCRG meeting.
- Trees were important for climate resilience, shading, temperature reduction, and biodiversity, and tree planting initiatives should be supported by the Council.

In response to points made during the discussion, the Chair advised that:

- People could not be scared into action, and most people watching the PEB or NEB would likely be knowledgeable of the climate crisis already.
- Pushing the Council to do more was welcomed, and they would do whatever they could within their remit.
- Growing more in public space and identifying better use of land was a positive idea, but it was recognised that these spaces would need to be maintained.
- Getcomposting.com provided information on compost bins, water buttes and more, although it was recognised that the Council did not provide these currently.

- Growing young trees was very water intensive, and despite the best efforts of the Council to water those under their control over the summer, some had died.
- Residents had been encouraged to water young trees where possible.

In response to points made during the discussion, the Policy & Strategy Team Leader advised that:

- The Council would be running a stall at Baldock EcoFest.
- One action within the Sustainability Strategy looked at the feasibility of tree shading and planting, but this was still in the early stages and an update would be provided in due course.

In response to points made during the discussion, the Policy & Strategy Officer advised that they would seek clarification on the process to obtain an allotment with the Green Space Team, and urged anyone interested in this to contact the Environment Panel Inbox.

The Chair thanked NEHCRG for their presentation, Members and members of the public for their participation in the discussion, and Officers for their responses.

14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 01 hours 33 minutes 10 seconds

The Chair advised that a discussion with members of the public had taken place under Agenda Item 6 at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.11 pm

Chair