

## **NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,  
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY  
ON THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

#### **MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Chair), Steve Jarvis, Val Bryant, Sam Collins, David Levett (In place of Claire Strong), Gerald Morris, Michael Muir and Kay Tart*

**In Attendance:** *Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Georgina Chapman (Trainee Policy Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting Councillors Ian Albert, Helen Oliver and Martin Stears-Handscorn and approximately 14 members of the public, including registered speakers*

#### **50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 Minute 19 Seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Moody and Claire Strong.

Having given due notice, Councillor David Levett advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Claire Strong,

#### **51 MINUTES - 9 JANUARY 2020**

*Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 35 Seconds*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 January 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### **52 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio Recording – 2 Minutes 23 Seconds*

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;

- (4) The Chair advised that the dates of meetings in 2020/21 were now on the Council's website;
- (5) The Chair advised that this meeting was about travel including transport.

## **53 INTRODUCTION - INFORMATION NOTE PREPARED FOR HITCHIN COMMITTEE**

*Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 57 Seconds*

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the Information Note entitled NHDC Transport Projects Update, on behalf of the Transport Policy Officer, which had been prepared for the Hitchin Committee on 10 March 2020.

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager provided the following information:

- There were 5 transport strategies being worked upon at present;
- One of those strategies included drafting NHDC's first EV (Electric Vehicle) Charging strategy. The strategy would cover all aspects of EV charging;
- The first draft EV strategy would be completed in June 2020;
- There was a 5 minute online survey available on the Council's website in order to inform the EV strategy;
- There was a Department of Transport initiative to encourage all local authorities to draft a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The Council were looking at working with walking and cycling groups in the local community to help facilitate the project;
- The Transport Forum had been established and the initial meeting was held in November 2019. The next meeting would be held on 9 March 2020;
- 90/91 and 127 Bus Service Project – the intention was to combine the 90/91 and 127 to create a new Letchworth to Royston service via Ashwell, the Mordens, Litlington and Bassingbourn. In addition, the 202 would be extended to serve both Guilden Morden and Steeple Morden and Ashwell and Morden Station. These new services were due to launch in July 2020;
- The Rural Mobility Fund was to provide funding for a Demand Responsive Transport Scheme to improve public transport in rural areas; and
- The All-Electric Bus Town fund was to enable a whole town to be able to convert all the local buses to electric vehicles.

In response to questions raised by the Panel and members of the public, the Policy and Community Engagement Manager advised that he would feed those back to the Transport Policy Officer.

## **54 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION-GILLY CHEGWYN**

*Audio Recording – 13 Minutes 13 Seconds*

Ms Gilly Chegwyn gave a presentation on Air Pollution and Health as follows:

- The effects that air pollution had on people's health;
- Air pollution may be associated with a wider range of health conditions including lung cancer, asthma, diabetes, dementia, strokes and heart attacks;
- Infant mortality, poorer brain development and reduced lung growth and function were caused by air pollution;
- Long term and short term exposure to traffic pollution increased the risk of miscarriages;
- Toxic air pollution caused more than 40,000 deaths in Britain each year; and
- Public Health England estimated that air pollution costed the NHS and social care services £40 million annually.

The Chair invited Nicky Clark to address the Panel in order to provide some practical solutions to reducing air pollution.

There was a discussion between the Panel and members of the public in relation to Ms Chegwyn's presentation on air pollution.

The following Members took part in the discussion:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Val Bryant; and
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Councillor Ian Albert, Chair of the Hitchin Committee, informed the Panel and members of the public that there would be a Councillor Surgery taking place on Friday 6 and Saturday 7 March 2020 in relation to the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy. However, transport would also be covered.

The Chair thanked Ms Chegwyn for her informative and sobering presentation.

## **55 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - ROD HART**

*Audio Recording – 42 Minutes 20 Seconds*

Mr Rod Hart gave a presentation on CO2 emissions generated by transport in North Hertfordshire and provided some possible suggestions in respect of ways CO2 emissions could be reduced, as follows:

- Stop paying mileage to Members and Officers on official business until they have ultra-low emissions vehicles;
- Council owned properties should include Electric Vehicle charging points;
- Council owned car parks should double their car parking charges for non-ultra-low emission vehicles;
- Council owned vehicle fleet should be converted to ultra-low emission vehicles;
- Public transport operating in the District should be replaced with electric vehicles;
- Encourage residents and businesses to transition to ultra-low emission vehicles;
- Citizens to be incentivised to run ultra-low emission vehicles by a reduction in their council tax and grants for the installation of residential Electric Vehicle charging points; and
- New residential developments should not include off-road parking and severe restrictions made on on-road parking.

There was a discussion between the Panel and members of the public in relation to Mr Hart's suggestions on ways to reduce CO2 emissions.

The following Members took part in discussions:

- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor David Levett; and
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

The Chair thanked Mr Hart for his presentation.

## **56 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - JULIA SONANDER**

*Audio Recording – 1 Hour 8 Minutes 37 Seconds*

Mrs Julia Sonander, Transition Towns Letchworth, gave a presentation on a sustainable travel town plan for Letchworth, as follows:

- Every town in North Hertfordshire should have a sustainable travel town plan;
- Transition Town Letchworth would be happy to contribute to development of a sustainable travel town;
- People who cycle the routes should be able to contribute to the plans;
- Letchworth would benefit from more pedestrian crossings;
- Letchworth would benefit from some paths being widened in order to make it easier for wheelchair users and those with pushchairs;
- On-road parking should be prevented where pedestrians were forced into the road;
- Letchworth cyclists had identified five beneficial schemes;
- Letchworth was in need of cycle routes; and
- Letchworth road design needed improving.

There was a discussion between the Panel and members of the public in relation to Ms Sonander's presentation.

The following Members took part in the discussions:

- Councillor Sam Collins; and
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

The Chair thanked Mrs Sonander for her presentation.

## **57 DISCUSSION REGARDING TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT**

*Audio Recording – 1 Hour 23 Minutes*

Members of the public engaged with the Panel in discussions regarding travel and transport which further expanded on points raised within the presentations made at the meeting, as follows:

- Car free days;
- Cycle to work schemes;
- Cycle routes;
- Improving road layout;
- Prioritising cycles over vehicles;
- Electric vehicles;
- Pedestrian walk ways;
- Making it easier for people to cycle across villages;
- The importance of education in tackling car idling and usage;
- Priority given to public transport and carsharing; and
- Encouraging 'staycations' and creating Destination Towns and Districts in order to reduce air travel.

It was recommended by Ms Chegwyn that Members watched the Youtube video 'Utrecht: Planning for People & Bikes, Not for Cars'.

Members of the public were informed about the Transport User Forum which was due to take place on 9 March 2020 at 7:30pm in the Council Chamber.

**58 INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER FOR 2019/20**

*Audio Recording – 1 Hour 38 Minutes 20 Seconds*

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the report entitled Work Programme and Action Tracker for 2019/20 and drew attention to the following:

- Dates for the next Cabinet Panel on the Environment would be 26 May 2020, 7 July 2020, 9 September 2020, 17 November 2020 and 23 February 2021, subject to ratification;
- The letter regarding Luton Airport Expansion had been dispatched in December;
- Work was being undertaken on an empty dwellings strategy policy;
- The Executive Member for Planning and Transport was considering the possibility of a Design Standards Committee;
- Work was ongoing regarding investigating the process to access an empty shop for Terracycle;
- There was a Promoting Suitability Event taking place on Saturday 4 April at Hitchin Town Hall which everyone was invited to.

In response to a Member's question regarding measuring the effectiveness of the panel, the Chair advised that an evaluation meeting would take place after May 2020 as a priority.

Councillor Steve Jarvis informed the Panel about the Implementation Group which included all the Councillors, Senior Officers and Service Directors in order to recognise that tackling climate change was the responsibility of the whole Council. The Group's work looked at the implementation of what has been done and agreed the necessary actions to take forward.

**RESOLVED:** That the report entitled Work Programme and Action Tracker for 2019/20 be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.17 pm

Chair