

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON TUESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg and Councillor Steve Jarvis (Chairs), Val Bryant, Sam Collins, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir and Claire Strong*

In Attendance: *Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Georgina Chapman (Policy Officer) and Chloe Hipwood (Service Manager - Waste and Recycling)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting Councillor Carol Stanier and approximately 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

18 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio Recording – 30 seconds.

The Chair, Councillor Steve Jarvis, welcomed everyone to this virtual meeting of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer gave advice on the following:

- Attendance;
- Live streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Voting;

The Chair, Councillor Steve Jarvis, started the meeting proper.

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds.

Councillor Val Bryant advised that Councillor Mike Hughson (substitute) sent his apologies.

Councillor Carol Stanier advised that she was in attendance but not substituting and if a voting matter were to arise she would not participate.

There were no other apologies.

20 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 16 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 noted that the theme for this meeting was Food Waste;
- (5) The Chair advised that the Information Note of the Policy & Community Engagement Manager - Work Programme & Action Tracker would be taken before the presentations and public participation.

21 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 3 minutes 16 seconds.

No items were referred from other committees.

22 PRESENTATION BY SERVICE MANAGER - WASTE & RECYCLING

Audio Recording – 7 minutes 10 seconds.

The Service Manager – Waste & Recycling gave a presentation and highlighted the following:

- Food production produced around 30% of global greenhouse gasses each year;
- The UK was a comparably wasteful society with regards to food;
- 4.5 million tonnes of food considered edible was wasted every year in the UK;
- Meal planning, appropriate food purchasing, and portion sizing were relevant to everybody in reducing the amount of edible food in the waste stream;
- Other actions such as home-grown veg, composting, zero waste cooking, and keeping domestic livestock were also relevant to reducing food waste;
- The World Wildlife Fund estimated that 11% of global greenhouse gases could be reduced by reducing food waste;
- Food waste reduction was not just a question of food waste recycling, which NHDC does offer, but a wider issue of reducing wasted food overall;
- In 2019/20 North Herts residents recycled 1.61kg of food waste per household per week;
- This figure was good and compared reasonably well with other neighbouring authorities;
- This information combined with waste composition analysis suggests North Herts residents were producing more like 2.79kg of food waste per household per week;
- Under 58% of food waste was being captured by the food waste recycling scheme;
- Capturing more of extant waste and reducing waste overall were both important goals;
- About 81% of the food waste in the residual waste stream was considered edible;
- There was significant scope for improvement in the district on these figures and changing resident behaviour and tackling consumer food waste was part of that goal;
- 23% of residual household waste (purple bin) was food waste;
- Around 17% of the residual household waste stream was dry recycling;
- A further 17% of the same stream was plastics not currently recyclable under the scheme;
- Food waste recycling was back to pre-COVID pandemic levels;
- The Council was not recycling a higher percentage of food waste than it was pre-COVID despite increased waste levels and more home working;
- There was 1.5 thousand tonnes (around 25kg per household) more residual waste produced in the last 4 months compared to the same period last year;

- The main work of the Waste Services team was on prevention, promotion and participation;
- The tonnage of food waste collected over the October pumpkin carving season had not increased;
- Love Food Hate Waste was the main campaign that the Council promoted in order to reduce food waste;
- The Council's ability to promote campaigns to residents was limited;
- There was always a double-page spread on Waste & Recycling in Insight, the Council's magazine; over summer it was focussed on food waste;
- The reach of the Council's social media accounts was not broad and could be improved;
- A part time officer post has been created which will promote waste reduction initiatives;
- Waste service participation in North Herts was low according to waste collection crew reports; around 8,000 households regularly fail to put out their food waste bin;
- Service mobilisation issues at the start of the service disincentivized uptake;
- 6.68kg per household per year in food waste was captured from households participating in the scheme;

The following Members asked questions:

- Cllr Claire Strong
- Cllr Michael Muir
- Cllr Val Bryant
- Cllr Gerald Morris

In response to questions the Service Manager – Waste & Recycling advised:

- Residents using their food waste caddies were more likely to be thinking about food waste reduction;
- Information on the breakdown of edible vs inedible waste in food waste caddies was not available;
- The waste disposal authority was Herts County Council and when the contracts for disposal were let for tender the biogen facility in Baldock was not yet built;
- At last update the biogen facility was at capacity and we rely on them bidding for contracts with the County Council;
- The Herts Waste Partnership produced an annual report every year which includes information on end-destination; 86% of all waste from Herts was processed in the UK.

In response to questions the Executive Member for Recycling & Waste Management advised:

- The school outreach programme was in place but had taken a back-seat in light of ongoing pandemic difficulties and the challenges facing schools.

At the invitation of the Chair, Emma Goulding from Food Rescue Hub noted:

- There were a plethora of reasons that food ends up in a food waste caddy that were avoidable and connected to education;
- Educating children on food waste issues had limited effectiveness considering the control of family budget and shopping decisions;

The Chair noted that reducing the carbon impact of food relied on reducing waste or directing it to anaerobic digestion processing.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Service Manager – Waste be thanked for her informative presentation.

- (2) That the Cabinet Panel on the Environment is supportive of anaerobic digestion options being pursued and that the Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management be requested to discuss the Panel's view with the Leader of the Council and convey this view when the contract is up for tender;

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Cabinet Panel on the Environment to consider the issues around reduction of food waste.

23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 46 minutes 53 seconds.

The Chair noted that Yvette Churchman, Morrison's Community Champion, had been expected but was not present.

N.B: Subsequent to the meeting it was made clear that Yvette Churchman's absence was due to sickness.

The Panel received a verbal presentation from Emma Goulding, Food Rescue Hub, including:

- Hitchin Food Rescue Hub raised awareness about food waste and food retail practices;
- Food Rescue Hub ran for just under a year before the pandemic and was a non-assessed programme accessible to all to educate people about food waste and provide a regular opportunity to consider actions on reducing food waste;
- The Food Rescue Hub initially shut down during the pandemic because of its heavily public facing programme but was contacted by the major surplus food distributors in the country, Neighbourly and FareShare, and asked to resume activities;
- For 5 months while unable to meet the public the Food Rescue Hub saw shortages in stores and individuals unable to access food while at the same time had to increase their operations and handle 900 crates of surplus food a month;
- The Food Rescue Hub expanded to cover most of Herts and in to Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire;
- The focus of the Food Rescue Hub shifted from environmental concerns to a food provision organisation to respond to people in need;
- It became more costly to run the Hub, food providers had more erratic supply patterns, more people were in need of food;
- Once lockdown had lifted the public-facing operation re-opened in a COVID-safe way;
- The way the public engaged with the Food Rescue Hub had changed; there had been more discussion about the value of food;
- The return to work and reduction in shortages had lessened the shock on individuals and old food consumption habits had returned;
- The amount and quality of surplus food reaching the Rescue Hub had reduced significantly;
- Bread or baked goods represented roughly half of intake;
- There were many more surplus food actors in the market now including tech start-ups;
- Participants had become more concerned with nutritional issues;
- The Food Rescue Hub was not a food bank but the economic situation facing some users had demanded that a 'pay it forward,' system be established;
- The Food Rescue Hub was looking to expand to new locations in the future;

The following Members asked questions:

- Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

In response to questions Emma Goulding noted:

- The Food Rescue Hub and organisations like it have been used as waste disposal avenues by producers/distributors like supermarkets;
- More players on the surplus food market had created conditions in which desirable food had been set aside for one partner and less desirable surplus was being passed to Food Rescue Hub as a disposal method;
- The problem of food waste was simply being moved on;
- Food Recue Hub made use of unusable food for animal feed;
- Supermarkets needed to use the vast amounts of data on purchasing habits they have at their disposal to plan their production and distribution;
- Consumers needed to moderate their expectations of supermarkets;
- In-store bakery was a significant problem but bakery more generally needed to be looked at;
- Consumers needed to be made aware of the carbon impact of their food choices;

The Chair thanked Emma Goulding for her presentation.

24 STATEMENT & VIDEO: BEST BEFORE CAFÉ

Audio Recording – 1 hour 8 minutes 33 seconds.

A video provided by Best Before Café was presented to the Panel which included:

- Supermarket food surplus had increased during the pandemic as people stayed away from shops;
- Household food waste had decreased as people made better use of the supplies available to them;
- Online food shopping had become a new source of surplus food;
- 9.5 billion tonnes of food was wasted in the UK every year to a cost of £19 billion;
- 1 tonne of rotting food released 4.2 tonnes of greenhouse gasses;
- Most people did not make the connection between food waste and climate change;
- Best Before Café tried to collect surplus food to feed people, not landfill;
- Before the first lockdown Best Before Café collected 800kg surplus food a week; during lockdown they collected 2.5 tonnes a week;
- Best Before Café shared its food with the community and saved an estimated 50 tonnes of food from landfill between April-September;
- FareShare Milton Keynes had become a new stream of food waste accessible to Best Before Café;
- Retail & Hospitality Food Waste was a small proportion of the national figure, at 2%;
- Household food waste was by far the largest at 71%;
- Only 37% of people linked food waste with climate change;

The Chair thanked Best Before Café for their video presentation.

25 DISCUSSION REGARDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MEETING

Audio Recording – 1 hour 10 minutes.

The Chair led a discussion regarding contributions to the meeting including:

- Food waste had to be prevented from reaching the residual waste stream and captured in caddies instead;
- A Recycling & Waste Strategy was emerging from central government and the Herts Waste Partnership would be consulting on policy issues including producer responsibility;
- Many people were not aware of the volume of food they were producing and awareness would contribute to reduction;

- It was clear that anaerobic digestion of waste had to become a priority;
- Consumers had to be educated on food waste and appropriate shopping habits;
- The Food Provision Network could link in with food rescue and waste prevention initiatives;
- The Food Provision Network signposting information had been promoted on our social media channels;
- The emphasis of the Food Provision Network was primarily to address food poverty but since the pandemic the issue of food waste had become intimately linked with distribution problems and the input of a waste officer would be welcome;
- Service level agreements and stock keeping unit agreements necessitate overproduction on the part of supermarkets;
- Content analysis of the residual bin was a useful baseline measure;
- The food waste caddy was a double-edged sword which captures waste from the residual bin but should be used to discourage food waste overall;
- Boosting participation in the food waste collection scheme was a priority;
- Waste composition analysis in authorities in Wales had indicated that the same proportions are seen across bins of different volumes;
- The use of a food waste caddy made consumers think about food waste in a different way.

RESOLVED:

- (1) The Policy & Community Engagement Manager be requested to look in to including Waste Officers in the work of the Food Provision Network;
- (2) That the Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management be requested to liaise with the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership to provide information from food rescue organisations in the District and respond to government consultation on waste management policy.

REASON FOR DECISION: For the Panel to be informed of the actions and plans regarding the reduction of food waste in North Herts.

26 INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 13 seconds.

N.B: This item was considered prior to Item 22 – Presentation to Service Manager – Waste & Recycling

The Policy & Community Engagement Manager presented the Information Note – Work Programme and Action Tracker and advised as follows:

- He drew attention to Point 2.2 of the Information Note;
- The team had liaised with the University of Brighton on the future of the EdiCitNet project following the withdrawal of the Heritage Foundation;
- The team was developing a scoping document on Biodiversity Policy for the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership;
- The next meeting in February would cover air quality;
- The pandemic had affected ongoing and outstanding actions and progress reports would be forthcoming when possible;

The following Members contributed to the discussion:

- Cllr Claire Strong
- Cllr Michael Muir

The points raised included:

- There should be an agenda item for next year's panel to include a discussion around Water supply and disposal (pollutants to chalk stream with specific reference to the Pirton area);
- The next panel should consider all noise pollution.

RESOLVED: That the Information Note entitled Work Programme and Action Tracker be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Cabinet Panel on the Environment is able to plan its workload and monitor actions.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chair