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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

MEETING HELD IN THE REMOTE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2022 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Steve Jarvis (Vice-Chair), Chris Hinchliff, George Davies, Gerald Morris, Juan Cowell, Michael Muir and Val Bryant*

In Attendance:

Abigail Hamilton (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Georgina Chapman (Policy Officer) and Helen Pollock (Hertfordshire LEP Clean Growth Manager)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1:49

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Carol Stanier and Councillor Amy Allen

49 MINUTES - 20 JULY 2022

Audio recording – 2:20

It was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 July 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

50 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2:39

- (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.

51 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2:34

There was no other business notified.

52 Cabinet Panel on the Environment - Information Note October 2022

Audio recording – 3:08

Reuben Ayavoo presented the report and gave a verbal presentation, which included:

- Contributions to the Hertfordshire climate change and sustainability partnership which Members will be aware is the partnership with 10 districts, County Council and the local enterprise partnership
- We are working to progress the action plans against water biodiversity and carbon reduction and transport
- We are looking at the revised version as we are going on. We are reconvening the subjects in the refresh
- One of the biggest things that came out of the partnership was the solar together scheme which launched in August and remained open until the 27th and was around the bulk purchase of solar panels and battery storage at below market rate through an auction
- Hertfordshire had 10% more expressive interest than was expected so that totalled around 13,000.
- As a district we had around 2000 registrations which was one of the highest
- Offers have gone out since mid-October for residents to decide if they want to accept their offer or not
- We have done work around carbon emissions assessment which will go to the panel shortly
- We have also supported the local green festival at Letchworth and Royston and went down quite well
- We've been talking about the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan. There are consultations going on and the information note notes the dates they have happened so far
- Around the anti-idle policy Herts County Council has a micro-site called let's clean the air which builds on their clean air day. It informs and assists and keeps residents update on latest developments
- The business service improvement plan is in the works but will inform Members when we have more details

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Gerald Morris

In response Councillor Steve Jarvis advised:

- Street lighting is done by the County Council so anything regarding this should be brought up with a County Councillor

It was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the information report

53 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 9:35

Helen Pollock gave a verbal presentation on the Clean Growth Strategy which included:

- Climate change has significant economic consequences at a global and local level
- It threatens mankind and influences all aspects of life
- Businesses account for about 25% of the UK greenhouse gas emissions
- Businesses have an important role to play in protecting our environment and finding solutions and opportunities to meet the climate change challenges.
- The UK is a global leader for low carbon innovation and technology. It is legally required to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050 with key legislation and policy in place
- The UK clean green economy is predicted to grow at 4 times the rate of GDP and create thousands of new jobs
- Hertfordshire has other drivers such as populations levels rising by 175,000 in the next decade, we are looking to build 100,000 new homes and creating 100,000 new jobs.
- The government has directed focus and money to grow a green economy
- There will be employment and upskilling opportunities for Hertfordshire residents
- Many businesses are moving towards Net Zero to increase productivity, efficiency and competitive edge
- The main business case for action is cost savings through increased productivity and efficiency. It also relates to selling positions, a motivator for engaging and attracting staff, and gaining Government support and funding
- The role of the LEP is to ensure the opportunities for sustainability and low carbon economic development in Hertfordshire are identified and maximised to drive clean economic growth forward and to create those important employment opportunities to upskill our workforce, to make change happen. It also helps manage some of the flow of government funding to secure maximum economic impact
- Clean growth underpins Hertfordshire's Economic Recovery Plans and Sectoral Growth Plans
- The principle aim of the Clean Growth Strategy is to build a greener, more sustainable Hertfordshire economy and lead the way for clean economic growth
- There are two pillars: Growing and attracting low carbon businesses and supporting existing businesses and communities and places as they transition to Net Zero
- The priority themes are green economic footprint, development of green skills, business engagement and knowledge support, infrastructure, green financing, sector and place clustering and value procurement
- A clean growth activity supporting pillar 1 is the Herts IQ which is a 3M sq. ft. commercial space targeted at clean growth sectors. It is a sustainable place of knowledge exchange, collaboration and innovation
- A clean growth activity supporting pillar two is the Hertfordshire Growth Hub with Net Zero advice and sign posting
- There is a lot of Hertfordshire based support. This includes the Low Carbon Workspace, Eastern New Energy Programme, Low Carbon Business Support, Low Carbon Innovation Fund, Herts Growth Hub website and others such as Wenta, Herts Chamber and biz4Biz
- Net Zero and clean growth can't be delivered by one organisation or business alone, it is a collective effort.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Val Bryant

- Councillor Chris Hinchliff
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Sue Lines
- Deolinda Eltringham

In response to questions, Helen Pollock advised:

- The programmes are big, and they have a number of marketing tools that they're using. They have their own marketing team that identifies businesses that it might help. Businesses that are contacting the growth hub are being signposted to this help. Even if a business comes to them that wants help on another matter, the business advisors will now engage more with them on climate change and sustainability. We are using our business partners and groups such as the Chambers of Commerce and other groups that have newsletters and meeting to get the information out there. There is a lot more to be done to get the information out there. We are using social media and various forms of communication
- The LEP is part of the Hertfordshire sustainability partnership which has the sustainability officers of all the local authorities. They are aware of the grants. They do focus more on the resident side but we also push the business side.
- I cannot comment on the industrial development as I don't have the information
- The opportunity of the low carbon business support programme is very specific for North Herts. It is Cambridge that are running it and North Herts has been able to join this one. There are businesses in North Herts that have benefitted from the low carbon grants but we can look at some case studies to look at this.
- It is up to the landlord to drive some of these issues and some people might want to put a solar panel in for example but it is up to the landlord if they will allow that. It might benefit the small business but the landlord won't think it benefits them. The Heritage Trust has plans to retrofit some of their buildings and they have an issue that some are heritage buildings. Big landlords and Housing Associations are working with LEP to address some of these issues
- When it comes to closing doors that makes sense. When it comes to triple glazing it depends on the building. On retrofitting homes, moving from double glazing to triple glazing isn't always as effective as other methods that could be done. I wouldn't advise businesses to get triple glazing until they look at other options that could save them money
- I haven't got the information on the uptake of grants but it is something we can get and look at it on a district level
- A lot of the funding is short term unfortunately and the LEP needs to think about how we can do this in a small sustainable way. There might be some other financial solutions, but it is on our radar
- The Eastern New Energy Programme can EV Fleet audits which can help a business make that business case decision about what route to go down. There is more to be done, such as signposting
- We know some of the bigger businesses have legislation in place that enforces them to make action and changes and a lot of them are leading the way in some of these activities.

Georgina Chapman gave a verbal presentation on the Carbon Reduction Sub-group which included:

- There are some updates to the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) around carbon reduction

- They have produced a climate change training video for non-suitability or non-climate officers within the Council and also elected Members. It is about half an hour and will be shared more widely
- The solar together scheme was open for about a month for expressions of interest and then closed on the 27th September.
- We have had more than 13,000 expressions of interest across Hertfordshire and 2,309 in North Herts. We had the second highest amount of expressions.
- They split Hertfordshire up into 4 regions due to so many expressions of interest and there were 4 winners and all of the installers are local
- Personal recommendations were sent out to residents and the average saving from typical market price was around 14%. Everyone has until the 25th November to accept the recommendation.
- The first installation is planned for late December or early January and we will be getting weekly updates to how many people have signed up and how many installations have taken place
- At North Herts we are creating a summary of our carbon emissions assessments and we had an independent consultant come to assess our operations and give us a carbon footprint that is in line with the green house gas protocol. We compare this to our baseline year from 2019/20 to see how we are improving
- The Eco Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme looks at how your fleet is run and look at individual vehicles but also as a whole. It helps you look at your emissions and how you can run your fleet in a more efficient way to improve air quality.
- The electric vehicle charging points have increased at the District Council offices to support the transition to hybrid and electric vehicles.
- The Greenspace Management Contract Changes have carbon changes in reducing the frequency of verge cutting and has taken some vehicles off the road. There has been an increase in the use of strimmer's rather than the big ride-on grass cutting machines so we have saved some carbon there
- There are some policies in the upcoming Local Plan which support low carbon development. There are proposals to support low carbon energy and a requirement for development proposals to reduce energy consumption with things like design materials and technology.
- We are having conversations around the new waste contract and the various effects of this. Carbon reduction is a key consideration within these discussions, such as moving to a three-weekly collection.
- The solar thermal at the Royston leisure centre supports an aim in our carbon reduction strategy which is around exploring how we can more sustainably heat our swimming pools. Procurement has begun on this and we are looking to find a contractor to carry out the work.
- There are also plans to carry out solar PV at North Herts leisure centre, Royston leisure centre and Hitchin swimming centre. Capital bids have been put in for the next financial year. We are looking to see how Absolute Energy can support us in designing, procuring and installing those projects for us.

Georgina Chapman also updated Members on the last HCCSP which was on biodiversity. We are engaging with Natural England to have five new ponds for the next five years to support greater crested newt populations.

The following Members and members of the public asked questions:

- Deolinda Eltringham
- Councillor Chris Hinchliff

In response to questions, Georgina Chapman advised:

- The solar thermal at Royston is more of a first step test case to see how it goes. We haven't ruled out the other leisure centres in the future.
- The electric charging points that have been put in the Council car park are to support our transition to electric for our own fleet. This probably isn't for buses at this point and this might be a County Council thing to provide EV charging points for public transport.

Reuben Ayavoo also advised members:

- In the Hertfordshire bus improvement plan are looking wider. This is about need and capacity and it is being looked at. When funding become available electric buses may become more available and charging points.

54 POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Audio recording – 1:09:25

Councillor Steve Jarvis informed Members that there was a plan for meeting topics. The next meeting on the 11th January 2023 will address air quality.

Sue Lines commented on the idling outside schools and takeaways that affects air quality and the speed of cars in different parts of the town centre.

Councillor Steve Jarvis agreed that idling should be added to the next meetings agenda relating to air quality. He also advised that management of speed limits is a matter for County Council.

The Chair requested that, should any Members have any further suggestions for agenda items for future meetings, they advise himself, officers or the Committee Clerk.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Chair