

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
6th December 2023

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR: Environment and Leisure & Recycling and Waste Management

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This note highlights proposed items scheduled in the work programme for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2023/24, agreed at the initial meeting. The Work Programme at Appendix A highlights the agreed topics.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Panel aims to set a work programme which will enable open discussion that may lead to recommendations to Cabinet /the relevant Executive Members or Service Director, regarding actions that they believe that the Council should be taking to address climate and environmental issues.
- 1.3 This meeting will focus on the topic of Sustainable Development, including a progress update on the council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Sustainability, and an update on what is being done to support Biodiversity Net Gain implementation at a county-level.
- 1.4 The Action Tracker was reviewed and amended ahead of the September Environment Panel meeting with a view to improving its effectiveness and clarifying the areas and ways in which the Council can have a meaningful influence.

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 is the only remaining panel for 2023.

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)

We attended and presented at the HCCSP's annual event on November 7th. Our presentation highlighted the changes to and priorities of the latest version of the Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, as well as our plans to conduct a full review of the plan once the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy has further progressed. The event gave attendees the chance to feedback on the action plans and we will be looking to incorporate this feedback shortly.

The second round of Solar Together has now closed. 872 people from North Herts registered interested in solar pv through the scheme, with a further 42 registering for battery storage only. As of Monday 20th November, 145 households from North Herts have accepted their

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

recommendation, with 133 of those also adding battery storage to their system. 6 of the 42 in North Herts who registered for battery storage only have accepted their offer. The most popular reasons for declining offers both across Hertfordshire and within North Herts were the cost of the offers and personal financial situation. According to iChoosr's assessment the price achieved for the average 14-panel system within this scheme is 34% cheaper than the typical market price for an equivalent system.

We have compiled a draft climate-related risks log. This identifies risks to council services and to the district from climate impacts (extreme heat; flooding; drought; storms). This is part of the Adaptation subgroup work to ensure there is a log of climate risks across the county. This risk log has been sent out to the relevant service areas to check over and highlight any mitigative or response action that they currently take around climate risks.

2.4 Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)

The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 is now open to applications. The scheme is available for off-gas properties. Those who live in a property EPC rated D,E,F, or G and who have a household income of below £31,000 per year are eligible to sign up for home energy efficiency improvements. We have started contacting stakeholders in our target areas and will shortly be sending out a mailout to potentially eligible properties in Hitchwood, Offa, and Hoo. 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)

2.5 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

We have had heat decarbonisation plans created for North Herts Leisure Centre, Hitchin Swimming Centre, and Royston Leisure. We have utilised these plans to submit an application to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for works to decarbonise our leisure facilities. We will find out the outcome of our application by mid-March 2024 and update the panel accordingly.

2.6 Engagement and Eco-festivals

The Council continue to provide relevant updates on the Climate Hive engagement page and attended the recent Baldock eco-festival.

2.7 Community Investment Fund

The council's Community Investment Fund closed for applications on 26th November. Community groups were able to apply to the fund for capacity building projects which will ultimately enable the delivery of community value. Climate/environment/sustainability projects were listed in the criteria as an example of community value. The applications are now being assessed.

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. When considering additional topics, their risk assessment and prioritisation will ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A – Work Programme and Action Tracker 2023/24

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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