

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
17th July 2024

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTIONS FOR 2024/25

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

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This note highlights suggested topics for the work programme for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25 and asks members to feed in their suggestions and/or confirm their preferences. The Work Programme at Appendix A highlights these suggestions as well as previous topics covered.
- 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 Given that this is the first meeting of The Panel this civic year and that there are new members on The Panel, this meeting will take the opportunity to inform members about current projects and the various groups and partnerships that we work within on Climate, Sustainability, and Environmental issues.
- 1.4 The Action Tracker has been reviewed and completed actions archived. This meeting will include a review of the Tracker and how we use it going forwards.

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 be the only remaining panel going forward.

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)

The second round of Solar Together is now closed. 185 households in North Herts accepted their solar pv recommendation. The price achieved for the average 14-panel system within this scheme is 34% cheaper than the typical market price for an equivalent system according to iChoosr's market research. As of mid-June 540 Installations across Hertfordshire have been completed.

The Hertfordshire Growth Board have now launched their missions, one of which is Sustainable County. Sustainability is also mentioned within several of the other missions. The HCCSP is referred to in the missions and given a specific remit around developing a local area energy plan for Hertfordshire. A working group will be formed for this shortly.

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

Work towards compiling the county wide retrofit guidance has finished, with the guide due to be published on the HCCSP website very soon.

2.4 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are statutory spatial strategies which will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions to achieve these priorities. These strategies are legislated for in The Environment Act 2021. Development of the LNRS for Hertfordshire is being led by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), working in conjunction with the district councils and other stakeholders. The Strategy will contain a local habitat map and a written statement of biodiversity priorities. HCC has proposed that each district host a LNRS stakeholder engagement event over the summer and has asked districts to suggest venues and build a list of local stakeholders who we can promote the event and broader engagement opportunities to. We have begun building our stakeholder list which so far includes councillors, parish and town councils, BIDs, schools, community groups such as Friends Of groups, our regular Environment Panel attendees, as well as mailing lists including the Green and Growing Network. We have also included larger organisations such as the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and the Environment Agency. We welcome any suggestions from the panel as to who else should be included on the stakeholder list. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to feed in their knowledge about local nature to help shape priorities for nature recovery.

2.5 Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)

The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 remains open to applications. The scheme aims to provide free home improvements to those at risk of fuel poverty by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes. There has been a recent change in the eligible income threshold. Applicants previously had to have a household income of below £31,000 per year, but this has been amended to £36,000 to increase the number of eligible applicants. This was following lower than expected uptake levels across the country. A bid to further amend this threshold to increase the amount of successful applicants was unfortunately unsuccessful. The scheme is available for off-gas properties with an EPC rating of D, E, F, or G. We have completed mailouts to the key target areas of Hitchwood, Offa, and Hoo; Weston and Sandon; and Ermine. We have also had social media posts 'boosted' to key postcode areas. Posters and leaflets are available to anyone who would like to promote the scheme in their local area. 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)

2.6 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

We were successful in securing £7,743,224 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for decarbonisation works at our leisure centres. These works include installing air source heat pumps at Hitchin Swim Centre, North Herts Leisure Centre, and Royston Leisure Centre, as well as solar pv, and various energy efficiency measures such as insulation. These initiatives aim to achieve annual savings of up to 1,176 tonnes of carbon. Cabinet approved further budget for these works at their meeting on 25th June 2024. We are continuing to progress the project.

2.7 Climate Engagement

The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive has now been running for a year and has proven successful so far in engaging with and updating residents around climate and sustainability topics. The Hive had just over 100 subscribers in March 2023 and now has around 380.

Over the course of the year we have provided updates on energy efficiency schemes, sustainability tips and products, local events, details for the cabinet panel on the environment, weather adaptation information, green skills, ways to help nature, a number of county-wide surveys and lots more. We have engaged with residents through discussion topics on reaching our net zero targets and finding out what contributions residents are making towards climate action.

We will continue to keep residents updated on action the council is taking and provide information on how residents can help towards our sustainability targets.

2.8 North Herts Prosperity Fund (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) was originally Launched by DLUHC in April 2021 as part of the government's commitment to level up all parts of the UK. The SPF was to provide funding to every English and Welsh District and Unitary Authority over three years from April 2022 to April 2024. North Herts Council submitted an Investment Plan in July 2022 to access the allocation of £1,499,525.00 for the three-year period. The final third year funding allocations were agreed by at a Cabinet meeting on the 19th March 2024 and included £210,000 for a North Herts Prosperity Fund, designed to be used for parish and community projects.

Parish councils and community groups can apply for funding for a range of projects, including projects that relate to sustainability and environment. This includes community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects; creation of and improvement to local green spaces; support for active travel enhancements; impactful volunteering and/or social action projects; capacity building and infrastructure support amongst local groups; community engagement or local regeneration schemes; and relevant feasibility studies.

The fund will launch and be open to applications from 5th July. The deadline for applications is 1st September. For more information please visit: [North Herts Prosperity Fund | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/north-herts-prosperity-fund)

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 Suggestions and Action Tracker 2024/25

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