

**CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT  
9 OCTOBER 2024**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WORK PROGRAMME AND NEW PROPOSED ACTION TRACKER TEMPLATE FOR 2024/25**

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

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

**1. SUMMARY**

Panel Overview 2024/25

- 1.1 This note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting as well as a Work Programme and new proposed Action Tracker (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment for 2024/25.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Panel aims to set a work programme which will enable open discussion that may lead to recommendations to Cabinet from the relevant Executive Members or Service Director, regarding actions that they believe the Council should be taking to address climate and environmental issues.

Panel Meeting: 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will provide an update on the Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was approved by Cabinet in September. The update will highlight the key content of the SPD, the implications, and how the SPD developed since it was brought to this Panel for comment while it was in draft. The meeting will also include a run-through of the new national government's plans around climate and environment.
- 1.4 At the previous meeting we agreed to review the action tracker for this panel to make it more effective. The actions which currently populate the tracker, are not, in their current form, SMART actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based). Some have remained on the tracker for long periods of time due to being ongoing actions which have no clear completion point. We are proposing to archive all actions in their current form and begin a fresh action tracker using a new template (at Appendix A). This template will enable the recording of SMART actions. Additionally, we propose to hold a wash-up meeting with the chairs after each Panel meeting to identify whether any SMART actions can be added to the tracker based on the meeting discussion and to aid monitoring. This tracker will then be brought back to the Panel each meeting. This will allow the Panel to fulfil its aims to provide meaningful recommendations to Cabinet.

**2. STEPS TO DATE**

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Cabinet Panel for the Environment at the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019 meeting. The amended terms of reference were tabled for the Full Council meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> June<sup>1</sup>. The Constitutional Amendment Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023<sup>2</sup> recommended that this Panel be the only remaining panel going forward.

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<sup>1</sup> [Appendix B - Revised Terms of Reference for Cabinet Panel on the Environment.pdf \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Constitutional amendment report 18.4.23.docx \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

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)**

2.4 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 2024, 540 Installations across Hertfordshire have been completed.

2.5 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.

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

**2.7 Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

2.8 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. A series of LNRS Engagement Events were held across the county throughout July for people to engage and learn more about the work on LNRS. This included an event at Hitchin Town Hall. The events proved successful, with good attendance and engagement, with over 300 stakeholders engaged both via surveys and at the in-person events. Two webinars were also held in August for further engagement. Phase 2 will commence in the Autumn with online sessions with wider stakeholder groups to identify priorities and projects.

**2.9 Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)**

2.10 The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 closes to applications at the end of September. . 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)

## **2.11 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme**

2.12 The work is continuing to progress the project to decarbonise our leisure centres under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The project will be completed by March 2026 and aims to save 1,176 tonnes of carbon each year.

## **2.13 Climate Engagement**

2.14 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive has now been running for over 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 over 380.

2.15 Since its launch 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.

2.16 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.

## **2.17 North Herts Prosperity Fund (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)**

2.18 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.

2.19 Parish councils and community groups were able to apply for funding for a range of projects, including projects that relate to sustainability and environment. This included 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. A number of applicants proposed projects which would improve sustainability.

2.20 The fund has now closed for applications and the team have completed the review and scoring of applications. Successful grant applications will be notified of award following the Grants Panel on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October. For more information please visit: [North Herts Prosperity Fund | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/prosperity-fund)

## **2.21 Westminster Update**

2.22 An APSE representative presented at the latest meeting of HCCSP and updated members and officers on some key updates from central government. This included detail on the Warm Homes Plan, Great British Energy, Planning and Biodiversity matters. The presentation can be found at Appendix B.

## **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](mailto: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. Discussion will help ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

## **5. APPENDICES**

5.1 Appendix A – Work Programme and new Action Tracker Template 2024/25

5.2 Appendix B – APSE Presentation, Westminster Update

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 [Cabinet Paper 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024: Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)

6.2 [Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)

## **7. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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