

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 4 October 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair) (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Doug Bainbridge, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Wendy Kerby, Maureen McKay, Sarah Mead and Simon Speller

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.19pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Parris.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES -13 SEPTEMBER 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 13 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair advised that the report back on the Economic Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the local economy would be considered at the next meeting of this Committee on 21 October.

3 CLIMATE EMERGENCY - OFFICER PRESENTATION

The Assistant Director Planning and Regulation gave a presentation to the Committee on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency. He reminded Members that Stevenage had declared a Climate Change emergency and had targeted net zero carbon by 2030 with aspirations to reduce Council carbon emissions, support residents and businesses to reduce emissions and to consult and collaborate effectively.

Members were advised that the Council was working with Herts County Council and the Hertfordshire Sustainability and Climate Change Partnership (HSCCP) to maximise efforts across the County.

The Assistant Director reported on the 8 themes and high level actions adopted by the Council including People, Biodiversity, Transport, Energy and Water, Business, Homes, Construction and Regeneration, Waste and Recycling.

Members were pleased to note the progress achieved towards this target in the last year including:

- An action plan now in place for making improvements to grasslands, woodlands and pond clear ups resulting in a positive visual impact for the Town;
- 2 for 1 tree policy and the new St Nicholas Community Orchard; and
- The new bus interchange, bids for cycling networks and also electric bus bids working with Herts County Council as the Transport Authority.

In response to a number of questions the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation and the Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services advised:

- The Annual Climate Change Report which would show the progress in terms of Borough wide emissions would be considered by the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee later this month.
- Following consultations with the Citizens Panel and Stakeholder groups such as Friends of the Earth, 1600 people had been approached through digital engagement platforms. Members were keen to ensure that young people were included as they could play a major role in this engagement. Members were advised that the membership of the Citizens Panel was currently being reviewed. Members agreed that it was essential that when people volunteered to be a part of the Panel that regular feedback was given to them on an individual basis as well as a generic approach to giving the feedback.
- The Assistant Director accepted that refurbishment of existing buildings was a recommended way forward but that Stevenage did not have many derelict buildings that could be refurbished. Many current developments were on surface car parks and dilapidated buildings which could not be regenerated.
- It was noted that the County Council was responsible to assist HCC schools to meet their target to become carbon neutral.
- In response to a question about the Lister Hospital, there were a number of current planning applications submitted for works to the Hospital. The Council would also engage with the Hospital through Stevenage Together to ascertain the climate change commitments.
- In relation to recycling, it was agreed that more could always be done. An Educational Support Officer was now in post working with schools to target younger people. Further Government plans were expected in early 2022 regarding what was expected of local authorities in relation to future recycling targets.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation be thanked for his presentation.

4 **DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT - CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a Draft Scoping Document on the Climate Emergency Scrutiny Review for consideration by Members.

In relation to the Review, the following suggestions were made:

- External witnesses to be invited could include a representative from the Health Service, local residents with knowledge of the issues and a local expert;
- Possible benchmarking with other Local Authorities;
- It was agreed that an invitation to attend a future meeting should be sent to Hertfordshire for Enabling and Adapting for Resilience Together) HEART – a Hertfordshire based environmental community group;
- An invitation should also be sent to Councillor Phil Bibby, the Herts County Council Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Transport to attend a meeting.

In relation to the allocation of Lead Members on specific issues, the Chair asked for volunteers to undertake their own desktop and fact finding research. Councillors volunteered as follows:

- Cllr Kerby – the link between sustainability and small local businesses;
- Cllr Mead – communications put out by other Local Authorities;
- Cllr Ashley-Wren – the work being undertaken by schools;
- Cllr Speller – consultation and collaboration, looking at the visuals on climate change.

Other suggestions included contacting graduates at Herts University undertaking study in this area.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Officer amend the Draft Scoping Document with the suggestions listed above.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR