

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 10 January 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

Start / End Start Time: 06:00 pm

Time: End Time: 08:02 pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Booth and Adrian Brown.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the committee meeting held on Thursday 18 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR LUBO JANKOVIC DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE ZERO CARBON LAB**

The Committee received a presentation from Professor Lubo Jankovic, Director of Advanced Building Design and the Zero Carbon Lab at the University of Hertfordshire, on assisting the Borough Council as an expert witness in its review process of the Climate Emergency Response.

Professor Jankovic provided the following key update to Committee:

- The Committee was informed that his application for grant funding worth £10k for Developing Climate Emergency Response Policy for Stevenage was successful. The funding was awarded by Research England via the University's Strategic Priorities Fund;
- He advised Members that he had worked on a similar project for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council funded by the same scheme. The project assessed on how to achieve net zero housing for Welwyn Hatfield;
- He explained that they found out a net zero operational performance that could be achieved with increased insulation, increased air tightness, air source heat pumps, and solar photovoltaic and solar thermal systems;
- He also found out that the houses constructed from conventional materials would achieve net zero by 2065, and houses constructed from a bio sourced

material would reach net zero by 2045.

- The collaboration between the University and the Borough Council would help in using the existing research data and could act as a model for other Council's as a methodology to help determine if the net zero baselines are accurate and if the targets are measurable for each area
- The project would also create science led recommendations to inform the Council's Climate Emergency Policy Response.
- Members were advised that Professor Jankovic would critically review the Council's current Climate Change Emergency Response, and would help develop recommendations.
- The collaboration with the Borough Council would continue until at least 31st March 2022, and there was scope for further collaboration beyond March 2022.

In response to a question from a Member, Professor Jankovic advised Members that there was independent research done during the first lockdown on the level of carbon emission. The research found that the level of carbon emission reduced during the lockdown period, due in a large part from reduced traffic and people working from home. He advised Members that the target date of 2030 for net zero emission would likely to be difficult but not impossible to achieve. However, a 2050 target date would be easier to achieve, with some specific areas and targets being achieved well ahead of the 2030 target but others being harder to achieve such as the retro fitting of the domestic housing stock away from gas boilers.

The Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator for Housing and Health, David Thorogood, presented CO2 emission data for Stevenage. He advised Members that transport (34%) produced the biggest CO2 emission followed by the domestic (28%), commercial (18%), industry (13%) and public sector (7%). In fact, transport and domestic emissions combined were almost 2 thirds of the overall emissions for the area (64%).

He advised Members that as an authority, the Borough Council may have a small percentage of the overall CO2 emission for the Stevenage area, but as the local authority it had a large role to play in influencing people to make the right choices. The biggest effect the Council could have is to enable people living in Council properties to have less emissions.

He advised Members that he could look in more detail at the carbon emissions for each sector in Stevenage for a future meeting, providing Members with in-depth analytical data.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update from Professor LuboJankovic on the Council's Climate Change Emergency Response be noted.

4 **MEMBER MIND MAPPING AND QUICK WIN IDEAS FOLLOWING THE SESSION WITH HEART COMMUNITY GROUP**

The Chair welcomed two Members of HEART who were in attendance at the meeting and invited them to contribute throughout the meeting.

The Committee received feedback from three Members of the Committee following the Committee's previous meeting in November. The quick win ideas as contained in the agenda pack were put together by Members on achievable small goals to tackle climate change.

Members welcomed the recently published leaflet that was distributed to residents on climate change, but agreed that improvement needed to be made with the Borough Council's communication to residents to keep them informed on the improvements the Council was making in tackling CO2 emissions in Stevenage.

The Committee agreed to work with young people through the Youth Mayor to gather awareness in schools on tackling the carbon emission. Members suggested that an informal meeting session needed to be arranged to discuss working closely with young people and to work through their mind mapping ideas.

Members recognised the need to work closely with HEART as a 'critical friend of the Borough Council', and kick start some of the achievable goals targeting CO2 emission. Members also supported the notion to help to educate residents on Climate Change in order achieve goals set by the Council on Climate Change Emergency. In some instances some residents may be further along the Climate Change journey than others, with areas of deprivation possibly having an influence on this, with a greater emphasis on peoples day to day needs, so the challenge would be to bring all residents along to achieve the significant change that will be needed to address the scope of the climate change challenge.

It was **RESOLVED** that the ideas put forward by Members on achievable goals to tackle the CO2 emission be noted.

5 **NOTES FROM A COP26 GREEN ZONE SEMINAR ON CITIES, REGIONS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT HOSTED BY THE CARBON TRUST**

The Scrutiny Officer attended a COP26 Green Zone seminar on cities, regions and the built environment. The seminar was hosted by the Carbon Trust. The report by the Scrutiny Officer as contained in the agenda pack summarised the issues discussed in the seminar.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that the key lessons for Stevenage from the webinar were:

- Be science led and work with local universities and community groups - so a big tick for us in already in this regard.
- We need to broaden the community group activity and work more with local people (this could become a possible recommendation).
- Have a unified approach - could there be more work with all staff required so all grasp the scale of the problem and see the changes made to policy matter?
- Establish the metrics - the review will go a long way to do this.
-

It was suggested that a small group of Members could consider doing a tour of Stevenage on bikes, perhaps led by Cllr Speller to assess the reality of cycling as an

active travel option.

It was **RESOLVED** that the summary of the seminar on COP26 Green Zone be noted.

6 **NOTES FROM A POST COP26 LGIU WEBINAR 19 NOVEMBER 2021**

The Scrutiny Officer attended a post COP26 webinar on 19 November 2021. The seminar was hosted by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). The report by the Scrutiny Officer as contained in the agenda pack summarised the issues discussed in the seminar.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that the key lessons for Stevenage from the webinar were:

- Collaboration drives innovation not competition
- More devolution is needed, local government needs to have the combined size to work together on solutions
- Bidding for the same pot of money from Central Government is a bad way to fund climate change interventions
- You can't sell a hair shirt to the public – you have to make change easily accessible to the public
- Public trust is crucial as is the relationship with citizens. If the public are made aware things like retrofitting employs twice as many people than new build this will resonate
- Engagement with Universities is important
- Don't lecture and preach to businesses – help create collaborative frameworks between large employers and SMEs
- Help people to be able to do the right things

It was **RESOLVED** that the summary of webinar on post COP26 be noted.

7 **MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mapping Exercise Document for the Climate Emergency Review be noted.

8 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

The Chair accepted an urgent item of Part I Business regarding the ongoing impact of Covid19 on local micro businesses. Members discussed that some local micro businesses were struggling as a result of the pandemic, and asked what the Council could do to support these businesses during these hard times. The Chair and Members agreed to consider a report in relation to Council's support to micro businesses.

The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the Business Relationship Manager was already in the process of preparing a report, and she was working closely with local micro-businesses.

Members agreed that it would be helpful to arrange an urgent informal meeting where the Business Relationship Manager's report could be discussed.

9 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR