



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday, 23 March 2023

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Abbie Hamilton (01438) 242587

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Broom (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), J Ashley-Wren, S Booth, A Brown, J Brown, M Downing, B Facey, C McGrath, C Parris and L Rossati

AGENDA

PART 1

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

2. **MINUTES - WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Environment and Economy Select Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023

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3. **COST OF LIVING CRISIS - FOCUS ON THE COUNCIL'S EMPLOYEES**

Members are invited to continue the cost-of-living review focusing on how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting the Council's employees.

Members will have an opportunity to interview the Head of Human Resources and representatives of Trade Unions.

4. **CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE & RESPONSE TO THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS**

To receive an update from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change and the formal Executive response to the Committee's climate emergency scrutiny review and recommendations.

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5. **DRAFT E&E SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023-24**

To consider the draft work programme for the Environment & Economy Select Committee for 2023-24.

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6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 February 2023

TIME: 6:00pm

LOCATION: Council Chamber

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati*

Start/End Time: *Start: 6:00pm
End: 7:55pm*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Loraine Rossati.

Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren was absent.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES – 17 JANUARY 2023

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 COST OF LIVING CRISIS – FOCUS ON THE IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

The Chair introduced the speakers which included Simon Holmes, Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager and Emma Wright, Client Services Operations Manager from Wenta (an independent, not-for-profit social enterprise that run the Council's Business Technology Centre (BTC)), and Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager at Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). He also introduced the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Councillor Lloyd Briscoe. He stated that SBC worked hard to support businesses in the town and there was importance in sustainable growth as well as collaborative working, such as the work with Wenta.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager introduced Wenta and stated they had 100 clients who operated from their facilities and they offered

business advice and support services. He then gave a presentation on their work at Wenta.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager stated that there had been pressures on businesses and there had been issues faced particularly around staffing retention.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager informed Members that in Autumn 2020, there were 22 vacant offices in the BTC. Over the last 2 years this had changed and there was 6 vacant at the start of the year. In terms of office movements, in 2021 there were more moving out than moving in, whereas in 2022 there were more people moving in to the BTC. Larger offices were also beginning to be less popular. The leads had reduced on office enquiries as brokers were not as active, there had been increased competition in Stevenage and Hertfordshire, as well as working from home having an impact. He stated that other factors such as aged debt had increased as well as short term cash flow became an issue.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager informed Members of some of the successes which included:

- The virtual clients remained strong.
- Incubator and co working spaces bounced back.
- Over the last 6 months meeting rooms had picked up again.
- Wenta had partnered up with SBC on the Net Zero programme and had 65 organisation who had committed to net zero and measuring their carbon foot print.
- Wenta had encouraged people to join the BTC and offered upskilling to clients.
- Wenta had partnered with organisations such as Google Digital Garage to deliver specialised content and nationally recognised webinars to clients.

The Client Services Operations Manager gave the Committee information on some of the business advice offered by Wenta. In terms of support required, in 2020/21 the top three subjects needing support were how to start (52%), finance funding, and business planning. In 2021/22 how to start support rose (60%), as well as marketing and funding. In 2022/23 how to start decreased (40%), as well as net zero and funding (11%) which was the highest since the pandemic.

The Client Services Operations Manager stated that in 2020/21 the top age of businesses seen were prestart businesses (55%), in 2021/22 prestart was 65% but in 2022/23 prestart dropped to 41% and it was the highest percentage of 5+ years (16%) which wasn't usually seen. In terms of businesses being supported, in 2020/21 it was consulting, food and drink, and retail. In 2021/22 it was retail, repairs and maintenance, and design and creative. In 2022/23 it was retail, food and drink, and entertainment and arts. She summarised that pre-start businesses reaching out for support, as well as support for how to start businesses were reducing. She also stated that more established businesses were reaching out for support.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager advised that Wenta wanted to focus on incubated growth and supporting employment in Stevenage through the development of growth sectors and supply chains. He added they wanted to expand their work with North Hertfordshire College, as well as Action Zero Accreditation. Additionally, Wenta was supporting Tom Pike, Strategic Director, with an Enterprise Centre in the town, as well as a partnership with Stevenage Community Trust to support the community. He brought attention to the Feel Good discounts area on the Wenta website which offered help to SMEs on services.

In response to Members questions regarding the BTC, it was advised:

- Churn was not new to the BTC, and Wenta offer roll on roll off monthly terms.
- Upsizing and downsizing did happen as people were more flexible
- The average length of stay wasn't often analysed but figures can be brought back to the Committee.

In response to Members questions regarding SME's, it was advised:

- The financial stability of being a green business was less of an issue with Wenta services. There were different tiers offered, bronze, silver, and gold. Bronze was free and there was advice around green services, silver and gold were small monthly fees. Business advice offered by Wenta was always free.
- In 2021/22 there was a spike in pharmaceutical organisations. Smaller organisations did face challenges now, as they didn't have as much access to resources, people etc. therefore they could lose out to bigger businesses, but this came down to their responsiveness.

A Member asked a question regarding the online vs physical shopping. In response, it was advised that traditional retailers moved online in the pandemic and people have come up with products they wanted to sell on online sites such as Amazon. Wenta had seen an increase in retail businesses, some are small spaces such as market stalls, but online outweighed this.

Another Member asked whether there was a strong online presence in terms of training for climate change accreditation and what Wenta offered, as well as how easy it was for businesses to apply for government funding. In response, it was advised that there was face to face training and support offered in the BTC. The majority of clients preferred digital training. Wenta offered different webinars on topics such as finance, cashflow management, social media, marketing, websites, and cyber security. This was complimented by business advice services. He advised that clients could speak on a one-to-one basis in person or on the phone. The net zero services and virtual offices were online and there was a live chat to a business advisor that was accessible to all. Additionally, it was advised that Wenta hadn't had any challenges from businesses and so it felt like an easy process.

A Member asked how many grants were available for SMES. In response it was advised that the grants are funded by the EU which was coming to an end and will be replaced by the UK shared prosperity fund. Wenta always gave out grants where

possible and would be around £3,000 for start-ups or early stage within the first 3 years. He stressed that grants were important for SMEs and Wenta worked with businesses if grants aren't available to find other options.

The Business Relationship Manager gave a presentation on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) in Stevenage. The annual inflation rate had risen since February 2021. By January 2023 the electricity prices rose by 66.7% and gas prices rose 129.4%. She informed the Committee that regular pay for UK employees fell in December 2022 and Stevenage resident weekly real pay had gone up since 2021 (£612.50) but was behind the Hertfordshire average (£736.10) and the national average (£642.20). She added that the average house price in Stevenage was £356,799, with this being the 8th consecutive month of house price growth, and the average property rent was £1,539pcm.

The Business Relationship Manager stated that 41% of businesses reported a rise in the price of goods and services bought in December 2022. Construction was the largest industry group in Stevenage (18%), and the scientific, professional, and technical industry came second (13%). The retail industry group saw a steady growth until 2020. Small enterprises had increased by 13.6% and medium sized businesses had increased by 28.5%.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted the opportunities for SMEs through the Stevenage Regeneration. The town centre investment continued, as well as mixed use development and the co-space area which opened in 2021. There were new leisure opportunities, such as NEWVU and Geek Retreat. Additionally, there was investment into life sciences. This includes the £65m Autolus investment and the new Forum development which brought science labs, STEM teaching and retail units. These supported the revitalisation of the town centre and created wider employment and apprenticeship opportunities for residents.

The Business Relationship Manager brought attention to the continued investment through unique Stevenage sector activities which included:

- In 2021 the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) site was refurbished which supported the highly innovative and technology smart workspaces for 580 members of staff.
- The new £35m UK Space and Defence HQ opened by Airbus which supported Airbus' continued investment in British space capability and toward the UK plan to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030
- Activities at Stevenage Biosciences Catalyst which £64m and 1,050 jobs contributed to the local economy
- Sycamore House which was estimated to result in £150m gross GVA and 2,800 jobs when fully occupied in 2027
- GSK created Europe's largest life sciences campus in Stevenage "fostering next generation of world-class scientists and biotechnology firms".

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted the Herts Growth Hub who conducted a cost-of-living survey across businesses in Hertfordshire which revealed how the cost-of-living crisis has affected businesses. In this, 61% stated they had increased their price of goods and 71% were concerned about the impact of the rising cost of living on their employees financial and mental wellbeing. She outlined the impact on Stevenage businesses, such as leisure, who had experienced a number of issues, such as recruitment and retention and decreasing customers.

The Business Relationship Manager brought attention to the Government support to businesses. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme was eligible to businesses and organisations to receive 6 months support from October 2022. This scheme ended in March 2023 but organisations that needed further support after this date could get help from the Energy Bills Discount Scheme. She also highlighted the grants funding, such as reducing carbon footprint.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted various business support that was offered including:

- Herts Growth Hub – offering resources to support businesses tackle rising costs which fell under three categories, boosting business resilience, reducing costs by increasing the efficiency and sustainability of businesses, and helping businesses owners/leaders to maintain their own wellbeing and that of their workforce. Herts Growth Hub hosted an event on 10th March.
- Wenta – there were various schemes offered such as Action Zero Support, Savings Support, and training and events to encourage.
- Networking opportunities through Biz4biz, Co-space monthly networking meetings, and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce.
- SBC – Shop Stevenage Portal which provided businesses in the High Street with a digital presence.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted SBC Mission 44 which was to provide a supportive environment for Stevenage’s disadvantaged young people to access wider STEM opportunities with businesses. Stevenage was a key innovation partner globally, but also key for investment. The supply of land and manufacturing space as an issue and young people had limited employment and apprenticeship opportunities. She also brought attention to the Generation Stevenage event in May 2023 at Knebworth Barns to connect local employers to local talent.

A Member suggested that the Council should encourage businesses to go into schools and tell young people what was available. Young people needed all the information before they left school. It was advised that new employers wanted to employ local people and were offering entry level jobs which were good for Stevenage. The careers enterprise programme and Herts opportunities portal promoted opportunities and encouraged employers to go into schools and work with young people.

Another Member asked whether interest rates were a factor in slowing down investment. He then queried the census information into current attainment rates, as

well as house prices and wages. It was advised that Wenta said that businesses had mentioned interest rates and although this was not in the Herts Growth Survey, it was a factor. COVID was a big factor affecting young people with employment access and work experience. Additionally, house prices were increasing, and residents' earnings were behind East Hertfordshire national levels. It was advised that there were new opportunities for local people and opportunities to upskill.

A Member asked how many businesses were being supported with a digital presence, and how many people are commuting out of Stevenage. It was advised that 63 businesses were taking part in ongoing activities to support digital presence. According to census data, 28% of residents were travelling out of Stevenage, however there was a similar number of people travelling into Stevenage.

A Member suggested that it wasn't only young people who needed upskilling, other people needed to be given opportunities as well. It was advised that people of all ages needed this. The Hertfordshire Chambers of Commerce were commissioned by central Government to support the Local Skills Improvement Plan and led on a number of sector led workshops to address the skill needs to businesses in Hertfordshire.

Another Member suggested that the Council needed to counter thinking of young people as there was a perception that they should work outside of Stevenage. It was advised that there was an issue within Hertfordshire but through Regeneration the facilities were improved, and this gave young people a reason to stay.

4 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was none.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was none.

Chair

Executive Member Response to Environment & Economy Select Committee Review of the Council’s response to the Climate Emergency

(Consolidation of composite document including the interim recommendations dated 23 March 2022 and final report 17 January 2023)

Date Recommendations of final report agreed by Environment & Economy Select Committee on 17 01 23:

(circulated Wednesday 25 January 2023)

Date responses should be made by:

Executive response on behalf of the relevant Executive Portfolio Holders should be received by Wednesday 22 March 2023

Recommendations:

Executive Response:

Resident engagement:

Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 1

- (i) With regards to the Citizen Panel, the handling of future iterations needs to be improved regarding the feedback with the group and ongoing engagement.

Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller, Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr.

<p>(ii) That the plans for working alongside and influencing local people be provided to Members.</p> <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</p>	<p>(i) The engagement following the Citizen Panel was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions, yet officers have responded to all previous Panel Members. Learning from the experience of the Citizen Panel, to improve the level of engagement and focus, the future <i>Topic People Panel</i> style engagement will provide an opportunity for local ward members and officers to hear the concerns of local people and provide opportunities for engagement and involvement in driving solutions.</p> <p>(ii) Moving forwards the Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach will develop to include resident engagement at a local street/neighbourhood level around climate change. This will enable local ward members to be at the forefront of this engagement activity with local people. Projects that been planning include the Climate Change Community Fund (aka Dragon Den), Street Planning and Neighbourhood Green Plan.</p>
<p><u>Baseline figures - measuring how we are doing with regards to our Net Zero targets for 2030 linked to a shared study with the University of Hertfordshire Zero Carbon Lab</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers continue to work with the University of Hertfordshire to assist with achieving the council’s zero carbon ambitions. <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator EH & SBC, David Thorogood</p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>SBC is continuing to work with the University of Hertfordshire Zero Carbon Lab on areas of joint research with Dr Lubo Jankovic. It is also working with the Lab through HSCCP on research about lower carbon buildings and evaluating embodied carbon of existing and new building.</p>
<p><u>Establishment of a Climate Change Lead Officer</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 3</u></p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and SD Resources Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that this post be made permanent. <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed & SD Resources, Section 151 Officer Clare Fletcher</p>	<p><i>Speller, Executive Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economy Cllr Lloyd Briscoe and Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources, Cllr Joan Lloyd.</i></p> <p>The post has been made permanent, and Veronica Chan has been appointed and starts with SBC on the 13th of September 2022.</p> <p>Following the October 2022 Executive update report and November 2022 Executive budget suggestions. February’s full Council has agreed the budget for a new Head of Climate Action role to support SBC in delivering their net zero work.</p> <p>Supporting local SME businesses with their journeys to net zero and make the most of opportunities in the green economy with 100 free Wenta (Business Technology Centre) net zero training packages.</p>
<p><u>Interim HEART – Community Group - Challenge</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that the Council engage further with HEART to provide some Member seminars on the Climate Emergency and that the Council teams up with HEART in support of a social enterprise such as a Climate Resilience Hub, or Climate Emergency Centres (CEC’s) Increasingly, these local physical hubs or spaces are popping up over the UK, and they collaborate, network and learn from each other. There are none so far in Hertfordshire – see presentation to E&E Select Committee 18 11 21 <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller, for Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr</i></p> <p>Through the recent award of the Shared Prosperity Fund the council will be keen to support the growth of social enterprises and co-operatives of this nature. This can be explored with HEART.</p> <p>Both E&E and officers continue to engagement with HEART and they are likely to be part of our work through Topic Reference Panels and wider advice sharing.</p>

Mainstreaming of Climate Emergency thinking with regards to all Council activities

Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 5

- Review Council activities to ensure carbon friendly practices are truly embedded. (Strategic)
- Look for opportunities where the Council can consider if an activity or an event can be made as low carbon as possible. A helpful tool is the good ideas about running a reduced carbon and more sustainable event, considering things such as measuring the current event's carbon footprint; making a plan; consulting with contractors; organise essential waste management and start simple – [How to make an event sustainable \(7 examples\) Eventbrite blog](#)

Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan

Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller and the Leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Henry

With the appointment of the new Climate Change Lead Officer, they have been reviewing the Council work streams and challenging each AD to demonstrate how their Business Unit is work in a low carbon way, including Estate, Housing Development, SDS, and HR.

Due consideration will be given to the council's own events calendar, alongside new events being programmed at the new Event Island in the Town Centre. In addition, the current guide for community organisations on running and event provided by the council events team will be updated to include such considerations. The ideas from Eventbrite will be considered where suitable.

Protected and enhanced Tree Canopy

Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 6

- That the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Regeneration and Officers establish a plan to meet the 2% gap in Stevenage's Tree Canopy, and that an even more ambitious plan be considered to expand the number of trees in Stevenage or offsetting in other locations as this offers one of the best measures for carbon reduction open to the Council ideally once any feasible mitigation measures have been implemented.

Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator EH & SBC,

Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan, Arboriculture & Conservation Manager, Cristian Pinta and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.

Officers had drafted a report, outlining future opportunities for consideration by Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee. Officers presented this report to Members at the meeting on the 20 October 2022.

Officers are also finalising a public consultation document that will help inform the development of a Tree & Woodland Strategy (alongside the Amenity Tree Management Policy) that will provide further direction about how additional tree planting can be delivered successfully and with support from the Stevenage community.

<p>David Thorogood & Arboriculture & Conservation Manager, Cristian Pinta & Environmental Policy & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	
<p><u>Planning & Development</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 7</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the constraints of the exiting planning legislation and powers for local planning authorities, establish a plan to make Climate change a planning consideration for all applications. • Officers devise a strategy re tree management & Planning & Development (Strategic) <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator EH & SBC, David Thorogood & Arboriculture & Conservation Manager, Cristian Pinta & Environmental Policy & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>All Strategic Major applications now have a paragraph on Climate Change impact so decisions makers can understand the impact.</p> <p>The Local Plan review will have a large focus on where we can strengthen Local Plan Policies around Climate Change, particularly low carbon buildings and the identification of ‘carbon sinks’</p> <p>Planning working with SDS will develop an updated tree management strategy.</p>
<p><u>Focus on improved Recycling</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Regeneration and AD Stevenage Direct Services brings back a report to Scrutiny Members on the actions and strategy it is taking to improve the Council’s recycling rates. <p>Action: AD Stevenage Direct Services, Steve Dupoy, Environmental Policy & Development Manager, Julia Hill, & Interim Assistant Operations Manager, Colin Littlechild.</p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Stevenage Direct Services, Steve Dupoy and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>Officers wrote a report for consideration by Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee, outlining actions to date and future opportunities for improving recycling rates. Officers presented this report to Members at the meeting on the 20 October 2022.</p> <p>Some future actions, which has the ability to have an impact on local recycling rates, will be influenced by the Governments’ emerging Resources & Waste Strategy.</p>

Protecting climate emergency targets within the budget setting process

Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 9

- (i) That Members and Officers involved in the budget setting process, as a minimum, consider the climate change implications of any budget decisions. Nor should there be a cut to services if there is a detrimental climate change implication; and
- (ii) Going further, scrutiny members would like the Executive to consider creating a small ring fenced budget in each service delivery area to investigate the long term budget implications of climate change for that business unit.

Action: SD Resources, Section 151 Officer Clare Fletcher

Response supported by SD Resources Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Resources, Cllr Joan Lloyd

All Executive reports now have a climate change section to detail the impact of that decision on climate change. Going forward officers are reviewing options for more clearly reporting on both the climate change impacts and the funding required to deliver it.

At the October Executive there is a report coming forward for the PH for Environment & Climate Change about allocating £7.5k per ward towards local infrastructure improvement, that could be used to lower carbon and improve local biodiversity.

PH and AD will need to identify from their own resources any additional requirements, however the new Climate Change Lead officer can offer both support and guidance across the Council.

When considering the need to make savings Officers and Members will have due regard for all the Council's priorities and set out any implications prior to any options being approved.

EV Charing Points in Neighbourhood Centres & Electric Car Club

Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 10 (i) & (ii)

- (i) Re EV Charging in neighbourhood centres – Members recommended that, where possible, officers consider the locations used should be close to the cycle network.
- (ii) Members suggested that when the Electric Car Club charging equipment was reinstalled in town centre locations that a promotional campaign with residents of town centre accommodation be carried out to promote their use and officers

Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Enterprise & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe.

(i) and (ii) are agreed and under way.

<p>should consider rebranding it, making it clear that it is for public use not just for SBC officers as the original livery made it appear it was just for corporate use.</p>	
<p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed</p> <p><u>SBC Social Housing & resident led environmental community projects</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 11 (i) , (ii) , (iii) & (iv)</u></p> <p>(i) That Officer’s provide Members with the plans to decarbonise its housing stock over the coming decade.</p> <p>(ii) That new tenants receive information on climate change in their “welcome packs” when they enter a new property, to include the Council’s ten climate change pledges and the most up to date information on recycling at their property.</p> <p>(iii) In addressing the gap between the Council’s current engagement processes and where it needs to be, can more be done with residents groups to, over time, move residents away from the day to day housing tenant issues to considering wider, more strategic, Climate change matters that in time will affect all residents?</p> <p>(iv) encouraging very local, small scale, grass roots events that can focus resident’s involvement in things such as environmental projects (gardens/trees) or community kitchen/growing or bulk buying schemes as an example, which needs to be joined up with other neighbourhood activities and needs to be a thread through all activities to address climate change, not as an add on or special one off focus. The Assistant Director, Communities and Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory agreed with this approach and informed members that he was working with his teams</p>	<p><i>Response supported by Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Deputy Leader and Housing & Housing Development, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.</i></p> <p>(i) The HRA Business Plan will include the council’s aspirations to decarbonise its housing stock over the next 30 years. This will be updated this year. It will be vital that funds are released from central government to enable this to happen. In addition, officer’s will be proactive in bidding for any external opportunities to deliver on the decarbonisation agenda.</p> <p>(ii) This will be included as part of the next refresh of “welcome packs”.</p> <p>(iii) This will form part of new resident involvement functions through Co-operative Neighbourhoods, where council tenants and leaseholders will engage on wider neighbourhood issues beyond housing management.</p> <p>(iv) A number of these types of projects and initiatives are emerging across the town and the neighbourhood teams continue to encourage and facilitate these as communities come forward with ideas.</p>

<p>to mainstream this as a default thinking and activity for all things they do.</p> <p>Action: Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</p>	
<p><u>E&E Members Quick Wins & Strategic Projects</u></p> <p><u>Interim report – March 2022 RECOMMENDATION 11 – (1 to 5)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Members and Officers lead by example, even if the benefits are small by acting appropriately in Council offices, plastic bottles, drinks cups etc. (Quick wins) (ii) Consider how to represent the progress of the strategy? Fishbone chart/Gantt chart, target lines, KPIs etc.(Strategic) (iii) A communications plan needed with channels, calendar, key messages, campaigns etc. Suggest starting with a campaign on the reduce your heating by 2 degrees (Strategic) (iv) Engage with young people via schools, Youth Mayor and Mayor's activities. (Distinct Project) (v) Promoting the 20 Minute Neighbourhood theory and willingness to encourage local businesses and tap into big business. These items would suit a workshop that needs to be facilitated externally to tease out some tangible actions. Possible HEART (focus on adaptations only, in their view we are past the point where behaviour can affect significant climate change) or Mutual Gain (a neutral facilitation company who facilitated the Climate Emergency Panel – circa £5K) or another external organisation to facilitate? (Officers have suggested that adaptation measures will also be considered on a countywide basis through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership of which Stevenage is an active member) (Distinct Project) 	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory Zayd Al-Jawed Communications Manager Lucy Watsham, Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Members, the Leader, for the Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller and (Children, Young People), Cllr Sandra Barr.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) This is supported and Comms can support with this messaging (ii) Under review as part of our climate change reporting (iii) Comms Plan for Climate Change in 22/23 about to be agreed. (iv) The Youth Mayor and Youth Council are keen to support Climate Change activities and would be keen to champion new projects identified. (v) Can be supported by the community development teams.

<p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</p>	
<p>Flightpath to reaching Net Zero by 2030</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 - RECOMMENDATION 1 - SBC and area wide pathway and targets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that clear targets and a pathway to 2030 for both SBC targets and area wide targets need to be established. It is not currently clear what the targets or pathway are to see how Stevenage gets from where it is now to 2030. The way progress against the 2018 baseline figure is measured and publicised needs to be thought through so that this is clearly described to show what progress is being made each year and understood by officers, Members and by the public. <p>Action: AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan</p>	<p><i>Response supported by AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>Officers are currently drafting three pathways on Fleet & Fuels, Building & Energy, and Ways of Working for the Council to get to Net Zero. The pathways are intended to identify the key constraints and cost for the decarbonisation measures so that the Council can make informed decisions on the best way to reduce emissions while addressing other interconnected issues.</p>
<p>Pace of change required to reach Net Zero by 2030</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 RECOMMENDATION 2 – Pace</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the climate emergency really being treated as an emergency? It is recommended that there is a need to ramp up the pace to get to net zero for the town by 2030. Members accept there are challenges around funding but where it sits in corporate priorities is an area that is a decision for the authority. Members will be looking to see how the pace is picked up leading to 2030. 	<p><i>Response supported by SBC CEO Matt Partridge, AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>Senior management's active involvement and collaboration with county-wide and regional climate change partnerships enable a top-down approach to addressing climate and sustainability issues.</p> <p>Aside from the collaboration, to demonstrate the Council's commitment to embedding climate and sustainability in all decision-making, a budget had been agreed upon for a senior climate change role to influence changes</p>

<p>Action: SBC CEO Matt Partridge, AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan</p>	<p>further. The additional resource will help to accelerate the pace of climate action.</p>
<p>Adaptations of SBC Estate and Sheltered Housing</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 RECOMMENDATION 3 – Adaptations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review established that due to extreme weather events linked to climate change there is already a need for adaptations to buildings and for up-to-date emergency response plans to care for older residents in sheltered housing schemes. It is recommended that there be an audit of all adaptations required across the Council. <p>Action: SD Resources Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher, Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</p>	<p><i>Response supported by SD Resources Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan, Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller, Resources, Cllr Mrs Joan Lloyd, Deputy Leader and Housing, Housing Development, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.</i></p> <p>Officers are working on climate risk assessments to identify the likelihood of future climate hazards and the potential impacts on the Council’s assets and operations. The potential control or management measure will be evaluated through the assessment process that helps to inform the prioritisation of action and investment in adaptation.</p>
<p>Helping residents to make simple behaviour changes</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 RECOMMENDATION 4 - Behaviour Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that officers from SBC link up with officers from the HCC Behaviour Change unit to work together on behaviour change initiatives. 	<p><i>Response supported by the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan, Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller, and Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr.</i></p> <p>The Council has been an active member at HCCSP, and one of the focus areas is Behaviour Change. Officers will continue to collaborate with partners from HCCSP to influence behaviour changes. Officers will actively</p>

<p>Action: Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Operations Director Communities, Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>seek collaboration opportunities with local communities, the library, the museum and the football club.</p>
<p>Regular monitoring of Climate Change actions</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 RECOMMENDATION 5 - Future review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has been recommended by the Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee that the issue of the climate emergency should be under regular review by the Committee and that a progress report should be brought back to the committee on a yearly basis. <p>Action: AD Planning and Regulatory and AD Communities & Neighbourhoods</p>	<p><i>Response supported by the AD Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed and the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller.</i></p> <p>Officers have presented progress reports to the Executive annually since the publication of the Climate Change Strategy in 2019. The report provides Member with an overview of the climate actions led by the Council and outlines further action being taken in partnership with external stakeholders at a local and county level.</p> <p>Officers are planning to launch an online platform to track all the climate actions that the Council lead on or in partnership with. The platform will be accessible to all member of the public to enhance transparency and improve engagement.</p>
<p>Training package for Members and officers</p> <p><u>Final Report Jan 2023 RECOMMENDATION 6 – Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee recommends the creation of a training package for members, and additional training for senior officers, on climate change mitigations and adaption, so that future decision makers are well informed in all aspects of the councils' operations, and the bearing climate change mitigation and adaption may have on them. <p>Action: HR Managers – Clare Davies/Kirsten Frew</p>	<p><i>Response supported by the Lead Climate Change Officer, Veronica Chan, Senior HR Manager Clare Davies/Kirsten Frew and Executive Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, Cllr Simon Speller and the Leader, Cllr Richard Henry.</i></p> <p>In partnership with HCCSP, officers are arranging a workshop on climate risks. The training is targeted to the Heads of service to improve their awareness of the importance of adaptation and to ensure they are equipped to progress on risks related to climate change.</p> <p>Officers are currently developing an Introduction to Climate Change training course for staff at all levels as part of the induction. There are</p>

	plans to organise different climate-related training opportunities for senior officers and councillors, including climate engagement and carbon literacy.
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Meeting ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Portfolio Area

Date 23 March 2023

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS FOR 2023-24

23 MARCH 2023

Authors Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Weaver | 2332

Contributors

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Select Committee for the new Municipal Year from a list of suggested possible work programme items by Members.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny (see section 4) be noted.
- 2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members, (see section 5), the Committee determines the subject matters to be added to a work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2023/24.
- 2.3 That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings to carry out policy development work identified so far for the Committee (see section 7.1) be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committees are asked to draft their work programme ahead of the new Municipal year in order that work may begin as soon as the Committees are appointed at Annual Council. Any outstanding and unfinished studies, where applicable, might also need to be included.
- 3.2 During February 2023 Members provided feedback on the current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.
- 3.3 When considering what work to undertake in the coming year, Members may wish to consider if the matter in question is of a cross-cutting nature and might lend itself to being considered jointly with another Select Committee.
- 3.4 Officers have also been requested to bring to the Committee's attention, likely Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) policy development items that the Select Committee might be requested to consider and comment on before reports there are submitted to the Executive.
- 3.5 The Committee may also consider whether specific time should be allocated for monitoring or review of recommendations of previous studies. During the summer the Committee will receive a copy of the Action Tracker for the Community Select Committee at which time the Committee can note progress on past reviews and determine whether they wish to bring back any further detailed updates on specific former review items at that time.
- 3.6 It is recognised that there is a limited dedicated officer resource for the scrutiny work of three Scrutiny Committees and therefore it is important to ensure that work plans are in place in order that the call on those resources and on each Committee's time on all its activities are prioritised and evenly spread across the year. To make best use of the resource it is suggested that each Committee chooses 1 substantive review item for the year which will be the Committee's main review, undertaken over a number of meetings. In addition the Committee could receive between 2 or 3 one-off single issue performance items and 3 to 4 Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) meetings during the year.

4 MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR IMPROVING SCRUTINY

- 4.1 In February 2023, all Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey to gauge views of the Scrutiny work undertaken and ideas for future studies. The following summary is based on the 8 replies received from the 23 Members who are on one or more of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.2 Members were asked to (i) comment on current scrutiny activity and (ii) identify any issues that could be addressed to improve the current arrangements and (iii) state what training needs they may have. Members provided comment and challenge around the following areas that relate to the Environment & Economy Select Committee:

Survey Question 1 - Please rate the following aspects of this year's scrutiny activity:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voids process review was good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voids has been productive, with some decent recommendations put forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E&E seems to be getting to grip with the climate emergency, but it's been a long journey. It still needs a commitment to get annual reports on outcomes like the total CO₂ equivalent emissions in Stevenage; the recent O&S meeting on climate was extremely disappointing and left me worrying that the Council still hasn't really understood the subject or the urgency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some PHAG meetings have been poor – the Zoom format has not helped
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hope the most effective piece of scrutiny will turn out to be the climate change work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting £7,500 for the Old Town
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective (producing a result that is wanted) None
Survey Question 2 - What aspect of scrutiny could be improved to provide a better scrutiny service?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only scrutinise things you actually have the influence or cooperation to change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did some work on 'scrutiny of scrutiny' a couple of years ago. I am not sure what has happened to it? Change of council leadership may provide a new opportunity to press for change here
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public health scrutiny hasn't happened yet. It should.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are in a halfway house with the election / appointment of scrutiny chairs and national advice. Perhaps if we move further there will be further improvement. It is clear that some have a limited grasp of what scrutiny could do. It is not a sub-set of the Executive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to see more decisive action coming off the back of the exercise, maybe with some targets
Survey Question 3 - Regarding supporting you in your Scrutiny role is there any specific training you would like for next year, and would you (occasionally) like to receive information about possible Member Scrutiny training?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work shadowing opportunities to gain a more hands on experience of understanding experiences of different areas of SBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is going to be training, please can it be with something like the CfPS rather than in-house. We need to get wider experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy to receive any training offered x 2

5 MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEWS

5.1 Scrutiny Members' Suggestions for Future Scrutiny Review Items

5.1.1 In response to Survey question 4 "What issues would you like to be considered for inclusion in scrutiny work programme for next year" The following issues have been raised by Members as potential Scrutiny review items:

Survey Question 4 - What issues would you like to be considered for inclusion in the (E&E Select Committee) scrutiny work programme for next year? (Max 3 items suggested per Member)	What type of review (main, PHAG, one off performance)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the Cost-of-Living Review 	(Continuation of E&E current main review)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of education and the local skills base in Stevenage <i>(Scrutiny Members to note the Exec report in March on Youth Skills & development in STEM and life sciences)</i> 	(One off performance review)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buses/trains. What has happened since we last looked at this? 	(update – leading to a main review)
<p>(1) The <u>climate emergency</u> must be retained at least as a tracking item. Some of the "throwaways at O&S were concerning</p> <p>(2) the <u>town centre</u> – how's it going and similarly <u>High Street improvements</u> – what's actually happened in the last three or four years, what will actually happen in the next three?</p> <p>(3) <u>Buses</u>. For example, how many people used local bus services in 2019; how many in 2022 or 2023? How many used buses to come into the town centre in 2019 and 2022/23? What's the feedback on the bus station from people who just want to come into the town centre; people who want to continue their journey on another bus; people who want to continue their journey by train (and I'm sure there are other combinations); people wanting to complete a north-south (or vice versa journey e.g. Roebuck to the Lister Hospital)</p>	(Priority 1, 2 & 3) (1 – update) (2 – one off performance review) (3 - update – leading to a main review)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fly tipping (including the handling of builder's rubble) 	One off performance review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning regulations 	One off performance review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking restrictions (There is already a work programme commitment in the 2022/23 Work Programme that it has not been possible to timetable during the year, but preparatory work has been undertaken in preparation for this) 	One off performance review

5.2 Statutory and Standing Items

5.2.1 Unlike the Community Select Committee the Environment and Economy has no statutory or standing items but following completion of its review of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency now has a watching brief on Climate Change.

5.2.2 Members should note that whatever issues they agree to be scrutinised as a main review item would be subject to a full scoping process and subsequently a scoping document would need to be agreed by the Committee at a future meeting. Other items, which can be addressed by a briefing and discussion item, may not require a full scoping document.

5.3 Work Programme Schedule for 2023/24

5.3.1 When the Scrutiny Work Programme is agreed by the Environment & Economy Select Committee, the Scrutiny Officer will, using the agreed dates for generic Select Committee meetings in the Calendar of Meetings, draw together a work programme schedule for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, including scrutiny review meetings, monitoring of previous reviews selected by Members and policy development meetings, which will be circulated to Members, and electronic diary invites will be sent to all Environment & Economy Select Committee Members.

5.4 Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

5.4.1 The Assistant Directors will take a leadership role in assisting and supporting the relevant Scrutiny Committees and specific reviews that align to their area of expertise. The Assistant Directors (ADs) will support each review through its various stages, from scoping of reviews, attending Chair and Vice-Chair briefings and offering support to the Scrutiny Officer in providing written and oral evidence for reviews as well as identifying 'Critical Friends' and other review witnesses. The Assistant Directors will liaise with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder(s) and the Senior Leadership Team (CE and Assistant CE's).

5.4.2 The Assistant Director, Stevenage Direct Services, Steve Dupoy has responsibility for supporting the Environment & Economy Select Committee.

5.4.3 Strategic Director, Tom Pike from the Strategic Leadership Team has overall responsibility for the Scrutiny function, deputised by Strategic Director Richard Protheroe.

6 MONITORING REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS VIA THE ACTION TRACKER

6.1 The Committee may consider there is a need to undertake some follow-up work on recommendations arising from previous studies. It may be considered sufficient to simply request update briefings from the relevant Heads of Service to be circulated to Members at appropriate intervals. However, if the Committee requires more detailed consideration or examination of the progress of previous recommendations, this should be factored into its work programme. To help assist Members to consider this, an updated Action Tracker document will be brought to the Committee in the summer and any additional work programme items will need to be added following that meeting.

7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ADVISORY GROUP - POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2023/24

7.1 In line with the Council and Executive work plan, items that are identified for potential Policy Development to be undertaken with the relevant Portfolio Holders during the 2023/24 Municipal Year will be circulated to Members as and when required and Members will be contacted with a meeting invitation closer to the PHAG meeting.

7.2 These meetings are private informal meetings Chaired by the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and supported by the relevant Assistant Director.

8 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Legal Implications

- 8.2. The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees is set out in the Local Government Act 2000. The recommendations made in this report are to facilitate the Committees to fully undertake this role.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.3. There are no direct Equalities and Diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Specific equalities and diversity implications are considered during each scrutiny review.