

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 12 June 2019

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: The Mayor Councillor Simon Speller and Councillors Doug Bainbridge, Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Laurie Chester, David Cullen, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Michelle Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Liz Harrington, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence, John Lloyd, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Sarah-Jane McDonough, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Graham Snell, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Tom Wren

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 9.40pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Bibby, A McGuinness and L Rossati and the Youth Mayor - W Sarenden.

There were no declarations of interest.

At this juncture, the Mayor made the following announcements:

- A group of volunteers based in Stevenage, Irish Network Stevenage (INS), had won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, Britain's highest award for a voluntary group. The award will be presented to members of INS later this summer by the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire
- The 60th anniversary of Stevenage Day, held on 9 June 2019, had been a great success
- Events marking the 25th anniversary of Stevenage Arts Festival were held on 1 June 2019. This coincided with the launching of the new Cultural Strategy called Stevenage Re-imagined. Stevenage Festival events were scheduled to run until 29 June
- Climate change was the subject of discussion at the Schools Parliament event in the Council Chamber on 11 June. Pupils from several local primary schools had recently taken part in climate change awareness activities

- Several events had been organised by Cycling UK Stevenage as part of Bike Week 2019 (8 to 16 June)

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Extraordinary Council meeting and acknowledged the presence of members of the Youth Council, UK Student Climate Network, Extinction Rebellion, school children and residents.

2 **MOTION TO COUNCIL - CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY**

The Mayor welcomed the two speakers, Dr Susan Parham (Head of Urbanism and Planning, University of Hertfordshire) and Mr Jonathan Gilbert (Technical Consultant - Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method [BREEAM]).

Dr Parham's presentation was titled "The Climate Change Emergency – Placemaking Issues and Opportunities". The presentation covered a background on climate change, decarbonising and emissions; facts and figures relating to greenhouse emissions for housing and transport; implications for planning strategy, policy and placemaking/design; examples in practice and options for Stevenage. In response to questions, Dr Parham informed Council that:

- Statistics on car manufacture carbon emissions were not readily available
- Electric cars were a transitional measure and not a complete solution to climatic change issues
- Car sharing incentives were a positive signal but this had to be combined with measures to encourage walking and cycling
- There was scope to do more research on the greenhouse gas emissions at county and town levels
- The provision of reliable and affordable (and even free) public transport would have a profound effect on behavioural change and go a long way towards reducing the use of private cars
- There was need for a focussed national discussion on the climate change emergency and a political commitment to provide and improve cycle routes and pathways
- Grassroots pressure was a vital component of the climate change agenda

Mr Jonathan Gilbert (Technical Consultant - BREEAM) gave a presentation on planning for sustainable development. Mr Gilbert informed Council that BREEAM sets standards for the environmental performance of buildings through the design, specification, construction and operation phases. BREEAM standards can be applied to new developments or refurbishment schemes. He then focussed on climate trends; the housing growth imperative; sustainable development and planning legislation and how local authorities can respond to the climate change challenge. Mr Gilbert acknowledged that eco-homes (environment-friendly homes) were slightly more expensive than standard houses. However, the environmental benefits of the eco-homes outweighed the extra cost. Members were informed that the cost of eco-homes was falling due to improvements in the quality of modular building blocks and solar panel technology. Mr Gilbert confirmed that BREEAM was involved in the testing of building materials and building fire investigations.

Council welcomed the Government's decision to amend the Climate Change Act in

2008 and commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the UK to almost zero by 2050. It was indicated that there was no requirement to suspend the recently adopted Stevenage Local Plan so as to align it to the Climate Change Act amendments.

Councillor J Gardner moved the motion and expressed concerns about delays in addressing the climate change emergency. He indicated that the climate change problem was not beyond our capacity. Council was informed that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change set targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and to net zero by 2050. The objective of the Agreement was to limit the global temperature rise to between 1.5 degrees and the politically agreed 2 degrees above pre Industrial Age. There was overwhelming scientific evidence that illustrated the catastrophic effects of failure to meet the Paris Agreement targets. Cllr Gardner highlighted the recent upsurge in climate change activism involving groups such as Extinction Rebellion and school children.

It was announced that the objective of the motion was to spell out the background to climate change in global terms and the Stevenage context. Council was informed that Stevenage had acted on its 2009/11 Climate Strategy. This Strategy provided a basis for the more urgent action that is required now. It was announced that the Council's priorities were:

- To update the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
- To establish a Stevenage Climate Charter
- To establish a People's Climate Assembly to consider options and monitor progress

Cllr Gardner stated that the climate change emergency required large-scale government intervention to revitalise industries, direct investment and boost research and development in the green technologies of the future. It was noted that the devastating effects of extreme weather disproportionately affected developing countries (particularly those in Africa) even though they contributed around 4% to global carbon emissions. In the United Kingdom, the working class suffered the worst effects of air pollution.

In seconding the motion, Councillor S-J McDonough highlighted the significant impacts of climate change such as changing weather patterns, rising sea level, melting glaciers, widespread forced migration of birds and animals and more extreme weather events. She emphasised the significance of collective responsibility in the fight against climate change. She hailed the success of an earlier climate change agreement – the Montreal Protocol – that protected the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion. As a result of this international agreement, the ozone hole in Antarctica was slowly recovering.

Cllr McDonough pointed out that it was now time to start implementing local measures to combat climate change. She reminded Council that Stevenage had a co-operative Council and therefore residents would be consulted and involved in the delivery of the town's climate change agenda.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor, OBE, CC welcomed the motion and emphasised that the Council had a significant role to play in the fight against climate change. She contrasted the involvement of young people in recent high profile climate change against the general reluctance by a lot of politicians to do more in the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Cllr Taylor welcomed the proposed changes to the Climate Change Act but was wary of possible resistance by some corporate bodies. She was pleased to note that Stevenage was one of about 85 local authorities that had a motion on the climate change emergency. Councillor Taylor highlighted Council initiatives such as the Biodiversity Action Plan, the electric car and bike schemes and Code 4 and 6 homes (sustainable homes). It was pointed out that Stevenage aimed to become the first sustainable transport town in Hertfordshire. The Council was open to introducing preferential car parking fees for electric cars. The Leader of the Council announced that Stevenage would take a leadership role on climate change and work with partners such as residents, volunteer groups, businesses and academics. She also confirmed plans to introduce a representative People's Assembly against climate change.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Cllr G Lawrence, thanked Council for introducing the motion. He indicated that his political group supported the motion in principle. Councillor Lawrence then moved and Councillor A Farquharson seconded that the motion be amended as follows:

Delete "- Ban fracking" and insert "- Working towards removing the need for fracking."

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group, Councillor R Parker CC, spoke in support of the motion. He reported that according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), there was consensus among actively publishing climate scientists that humans are causing global warming. Cllr Parker then moved and Cllr S Booth seconded an amendment of the motion to add the following statement to the final paragraph: "- Call on the government to develop and support carbon capture and storage schemes."

Council unanimously voted in support of the amendment.

The Mayor expressed regret that due to the lateness of the meeting, members of the Youth Council had left before contributing to the debate. The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder (Children, Young People and Leisure) indicated that Council was considering arranging a Youth Assembly meeting on climate change and how to engage the young people at a more convenient time.

The debate continued with contributions from Councillors and those in the public gallery. Speakers agreed that climate change action was long overdue and that the motion was a useful step towards addressing this issue. It was noted that Stevenage had well-established cycle routes. It was stated that 95% of scientists affiliated to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) agreed that there was a link between man's activities and global warming. Speakers referred to the evidence provided by the scientist, John Tyndall in 1859, James Hansen (former NASA

scientist), Sir David Attenborough (broadcaster and historian), IPCC and the independent non-departmental public body, Committee on Climate Change. Most of this evidence was largely ignored by politicians and industrialists.

Contributors also raised the following points:

- Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands were some of the leading countries in the fight against climate change
- Significant numbers of commuters resort to private transport because public transport is generally expensive and unreliable
- The replacement for Stevenage's 2009 Climate Strategy should include realistic and verifiable outcome measuring clauses
- The government should work with local authorities on tax incentives for electric cars and infrastructure such as charging points
- Government and local authorities should also consider introducing disincentives such as tax on short haul flights and workplace car parking levies if cheap and reliable public transport is available
- Individuals can reduce their carbon footprint by avoiding short haul flights
- All Council reports, policies and strategies should include an Environment Impact Assessment section
- There should be an annual Climate Change performance report to Council
- The Council will consider recycling out-of-date ICT equipment
- Council will also consider increasing opportunities for home working by staff so as to reduce travelling distance and gas emissions
- Council will consider facilitating virtual meeting arrangements so as to reduce officer and Member travel to meetings. This can be achieved via the introduction of tele-conference, video and web conference facilities

Councillors and members of the public suggested the following actions:

- Planting more trees
- Improving cycling infrastructure, facilitating the setting up of cycling clubs and cycle hire schemes in schools, facilitating the opening of bike recycling centres, increasing the number of cycle storage spaces across the town and improving security at cycle stores
- Raising awareness of climate change in schools and involving young people in climate change discussions at a local level
- Providing clarity on arrangements for the People's Assembly
- Introducing solar-powered street lights

In a reply to a member of the public, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council's target for zero carbon emissions was 2030 and not 2050. The People's Assembly would be community-driven. Council was looking at the People's Assembly arrangements in Oxford City Council and other local authorities. The Climate Change motion would be presented to the Stevenage Partnership of businesses, volunteer organisation and members of the public. Council will try to influence climate change actions of local businesses.

In his reply, the Portfolio Holder (Environment and Regeneration) assured Council that all issues raised during the debate would be taken into consideration. He stated

that official government statistics were used to draft the motion.

After a full debate, it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

“That this Council notes that:

- Human activities are changing our planet and the need for everyone to take action on climate change is more urgent and immediate than ever.
- According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) Special Report in 2018, human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1°C of global warming above pre- industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C.
- The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by “limiting global warming to well below 2c and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5c”. · In order to prevent further global warming of more than 1.5°C, the IPCC states that this would require global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050 and that they would need to peak within 12 years (by 2030) to increase the chances of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.
- Stevenage Borough Council set an aspiration in its Climate Change Strategy 2016-21 for Stevenage to achieve zero carbon status by 2050.
- The latest statistics produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) shows total emissions in Stevenage have declined steadily over the last 11 years. From 2005-2016, total emissions from the town have reduced by almost 34%.
- Emission reductions in the UK, including Stevenage, since 2012 have primarily come from the decarbonisation of electricity generation in the power sector at a national level, which is shifting progressively from fossil fuels to low carbon and renewable generation.
- To maintain the current rate of emissions reduction and reach zero carbon by 2050, further changes to national policy and infrastructure would be required in all sectors, including industry and commercial, transport and domestic sources.
- Emissions would need to reduce much more rapidly to reach net zero carbon by an earlier date, requiring rapid and wide scale changes in energy production, supply and usage at the national level.
- The latest statistics for the source of Stevenage’s carbon dioxide emissions are for 2016 and are; 42% from industry and commercial, 33% from domestic sources and 25% from transport.

This Council welcomes the new building control regulations requiring all new buildings to be nearly zero carbon from 31 December 2020 but note the damage done by scrapping Labour’s original 2016 deadline.

This Council will update its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to reflect the targets in this Motion.

This Council declares a climate emergency and we:

- Will continue to reduce the council's building and fleet emissions through developing and investing in carbon reduction projects and we will update our Carbon Management Plan regularly.
- Will continue to support residents and businesses in Stevenage to reduce their emissions using the powers and funding currently available to the Council.
- Will establish a Stevenage Climate Charter calling on all organisations, businesses and individuals in the town to each establish their own Carbon Management Plans and to commit to reducing their carbon emissions which will help us to work towards our towns net carbon-zero aspiration
- Will establish a Stevenage People's Assembly to monitor the Towns progress on Climate Emergency Actions against targets set by both the Council and other stake holders.
- Will continue to work with the Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum, the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Planning Partnership to promote and advocate joint measures and actions to meet our aspirational targets for carbon emissions reduction and sustainable transport solutions

We want and we need to be doing more to tackle this climate emergency, and know that with Government leadership (that is currently absent) we could be achieving zero carbon far sooner.

To enable Stevenage and the rest of the UK to reach net zero carbon by 2030, we call on government, industry and regulators to implement the necessary changes with funding, transformed national infrastructure, policy, new technologies and legislation, including:

- Invest in clean, efficient renewable energy and end CO2 emissions from electricity generation.
- Ban fracking.
- Call on the government to develop and support carbon capture and storage schemes.
- Invest in energy-efficient public transport across the country, including the introduction of electric buses.
- End the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030 and make cleaner vehicles more affordable and accessible.
- Establish a long-term nationwide Warm Homes strategy with adequate investment

for energy-saving and energy-efficiency measures.

- Support a sustainable food revolution ensuring sustainable, fresh food for all whilst reducing food waste.
- Develop a strategy for all UK businesses to be net zero carbon by 2030.

This will reduce the damage caused by climate change and will also create a strong green economy with new jobs, less waste and with sustainable growth.”

CHAIR