

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 20 September 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Matt Creasey, Bret Facey and Claire Parris

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm

**Time:** End Time: 7.45pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Downing and Lorraine Rossati.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 13 JULY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 13 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 EXECUTIVE MEMBER RESPONSE TO INTERIM CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW**

The Committee considered the Executive Member's response to the Committee's interim review of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

The following comments were made:

**Recommendation 1 – Resident Engagement**

- in order to engage with local people and hold community meetings, additional resources would be required;
- The Assistant Director (Planning and Regeneration) advised that the Citizens Panel had held a one-off meeting in 2020 but this would be re-formatted for more bespoke local engagement next year;
- Councillor Barr to replace Councillor Broom in the list of Executive Members.

**Recommendation 2 – Baseline Figures**

- Members were encouraged to hear about the proposals for the new Hub

building to be as energy efficient as possible. Members agreed that it was important for the reduction of carbon to be in the construction as well as the use of the building;

- Further work with the University would be welcomed as it was agreed that expertise and knowledge should be shared to address the issue. This was also relevant in relation to other Local Authorities;
- In response to a question regarding progress measurement, the Assistant Director advised that data was given to the Council on an annual basis by the Government and that the latest figures would be available by the end of the year.

### **Recommendation 3 – Establishment of a Climate Change Lead Officer**

- Members noted the permanent appointment of Veronica Chan, Climate Change Lead Officer, from 13 September 2022.

### **Recommendation 4 – Community Group – Challenge**

- The potential growth of social enterprises was welcomed by Members;
- The Council's Engagement with HEART would continue as part of a wider Topic Reference panel and for sharing advice. It was noted that HEART's main focus was the emotional and psychological impacts of climate change although Members agreed the importance of reducing climate change as well as mitigating the effects of climate change.

### **Recommendation 5 – Mainstreaming of climate emergency thinking with regards to all Council activities**

- It was noted that all Assistant Directors within SBC would be challenged to demonstrate how their Business Units worked in a low carbon way.

### **Recommendation 6 – Protected and Enhanced Tree Canopy**

- Additional tree planting was welcomed by the Committee.
- Officers advised that a report outlining future opportunities for consideration by members would be presented at the October meeting.

### **Recommendation 7 – Planning and Development**

- Noted.

### **Recommendation 8 – Focus on Improved Recycling**

- Officers advised that a full report on recycling would be submitted to the October meeting of this Committee;
- It was noted that the Government's emerging national Resources and Waste Strategy had been pushed back from Spring of this year. It was envisaged there would be requirements for separate weekly food waste collections, extended responsibilities for waste producers and more consistency of

- recycling materials;
- Particular challenges for recycling were noted for flat blocks;
- Members agreed the importance of spreading the message encouraging residents to use less so that less which would result in less waste overall.

### **Recommendation 9 – Protecting Climate Emergency Targets within the Budget Setting Process**

- Noted.

### **Recommendation 10 – EV Charging points in Neighbourhood Centres and Electric Car Club**

- Members questioned the logic of the installation of a number of EV charging points having been installed on or near cycleways;
- Officers advised that they were currently looking into the potential for an ebike/escooter scheme.

### **Recommendation 11 – Social Housing and resident led environmental community projects**

- Members were pleased to note the proposed increased consultation with local tenants.

## **4 INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Committee received a presentation from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, Councillor Simon Speller, on his vision for the development of the Council's Climate Change strategy.

Cllr Speller spoke about the 9 levels of engagement for Climate Change strategies and highlighted the need for Stevenage Borough Council to focus on neighbourhoods and street level alongside engagement with the local community.

The gaps in Stevenage Climate Change partnerships were highlighted and the proposals to fill those gaps noted including the use of Portfolio Holders, Outside Bodies, Resident Groups and People Panels.

In relation to Portfolio Holders engaging with people, Cllr Briscoe would be talking to local businesses, Cllr Henry would link with young people including the Youth Mayor and schools and Cllr Barr would link with residents groups through the next level of community and neighbourhood management work.

In relation to the Citizens Panel, Councillor Speller advised that the proposal was to separate into topic focussed people's panels and specialist reference groups to get more targeted results.

The Portfolio Holder was keen to support Members in terms of proposals within their own ward areas including identifying potential spaces for tree planting or plans for

smaller sites where possible. Ward members would be used as a conduit and gateway for resident proposals for their areas. Engagement with communities was key to this with a better use of digital communications as back-up to contact work.

Pilot areas for monthly engagement meetings were suggested including Pin Green/Bedwell, St Nicholas/Martins Wood and Shephall/Bandle Hill. A Member suggested that Chells and Manor could also be included in this pilot.

In terms of within Stevenage Borough Council, work would be undertaken to recognise and build on what had been done since 2020 and join up work streams where it made sense.

Members thanked Cllr Speller for his presentation and welcomed the potential for much closer working and the increased engagement proposals. It was suggested that the engagement should not just focus on tenants and leaseholders but be for all Stevenage residents.

Cllr Speller concluded by thanking the former Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor John Gardner, for his work and commitment to this issue in recent years.

## 5 **UPDATED MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Officer presented Members with an updated Mapping Exercise Document for the Climate Change Emergency Review.

Recent updates to the document were highlighted, including:

- Questions were to be formulated for the Portfolio Holders for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People, and Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People to be sent by 24 September;
- The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would set up a meeting for Members to attend a future Youth Council meeting;
- A provisional date of 24 October had been scheduled for a Zoom meeting for an informal sub-group of the Committee to meet with representatives from Friends of the Earth;
- HCC Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Councillor Eric Buckmaster had been invited to 17 November meeting along with the HCC Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport Councillor Graham McAndrew;
- The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would be drafting an email for the Chair to approach the Lister Hospital CE, Adam Sewell-Jones, in relation to their plans and actions on climate change;
- The SBC Operations Director, Rob Gregory had provided guidance relating to engagement with tenants and leaseholders.

The Chair also advised the Committee that he would add an item to the Committee's Work programme for later in the Municipal Year relating to the Council's approach to the Cost of living crisis.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mapping Exercise Document be noted.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**