

Questions for Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People, Cllr Jackie Hollywell, regarding the Environment & Economy Select Committee Climate Emergency Scrutiny Review

1. What issues do you perceive to be the main challenges for the Council to address in the Council's Climate Change Strategy to meet Net Zero, and thinking of your Portfolio area:

- (i) Recent Summers have seen high temperatures, with all the inherent risks to the health of the elderly, and those with chronic conditions. Are we working co-operatively with other agencies, to ensure that information is made available to vulnerable groups during heat waves, to ward off the worst health impacts, we all now recognise this weather can bring? Those in SBCs sheltered Housing Schemes and elderly tenants living on their own in the community come to mind.

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership provides a local forum for partners to come together to respond to local health needs. We need to start thinking about seasonal preparedness as part of these discussions with public health. We employ a health and activities co-ordinator within our own housing schemes to support residents with a range of health needs. The service has been particularly pro-active during both Covid-19 and this summer's heatwave in providing additional support to those most vulnerable.

- (ii) Should we be critiquing the County Council and individual school academies, to ensure that pupils are being offered a "green" meat free, healthier options on school meal menus.

Tackling obesity remains one of the core priorities of our Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-22 <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/leisure-culture-and-wellbeing/healthy-stevenage-partnership/healthy-stevenage-partnership-strategies> which Hertfordshire Public Health has signed up to. The health benefits of meat free diets are also being increasingly evidenced. This should therefore be further explored by Children's Services and Public Health and we could raise this with them.

- (iii) Climate anxiety is a frequent topic of discussion, especially for our younger residents. Should we be sign posting residents to support services which deal with this aspect of mental health, and where are they in Stevenage?.

This is a really relevant point and this is one we will raise with our partners working on the Young People's Healthy Hub. Signposting to current mental health provision is included in the offer. Details of the hub can be found via the following link <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/leisure-culture-and-wellbeing/young-peoples-healthy-hub/about-the-young-peoples-healthy-hub>

- (iv) Regarding equalities, do you consider if any of the characteristic groups are likely to be adversely affected now and in the future by climate change, and if so what can be done to help them?

The Stevenage Equalities Commission will shortly be reporting to Executive, alongside our Equality and Diversity Action plan moving

forwards. We need to further consider the equality impacts of climate change on protected characteristic groups. We know that lower socio-economic groups are disproportionately affected by the rising cost of fossil fuels to heat their homes, but often lack the resources to invest in energy efficiency measures or renewable alternatives. Similarly, for people with disabilities and in particular long term health conditions as they and/or their carers often have to use equipment that is made of single use plastics as no other alternatives are available to safely use. For example, personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, aprons and face masks have to be disposed of once used. These type of consideration needs to be factored into future community impact assessments.

2. As an Executive Member of the Council do you think the issue yet has the priority it needs?

We need to continue to raise the importance of climate change through all of our work across the council. We are joining up these conversations at Executive, as you may have noted in the Climate Change progress report this month. Of course, more still needs to be done at a local, regional, national and international level.

3. More generally, what level of public engagement do you think the Council should have for this over the remainder of this decade?

I would be keen to ensure we look at the join up across portfolios when we conduct engagement. None of these issues sit in isolation. For example we know that cycling is as much about health and wellbeing, as it is about leisure and as it is about climate change and sustainable travel. We need to maintain ongoing dialogues with our communities on all of these issues over the coming years.

E&E Select Committee Members may have further supplementary questions for you at the meeting.