

Appendix One – Draft Minutes of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Meeting 30 September 2020: Climate Change Emergency Progress Report

11 CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY PROGRESS UPDATE

M Gaynor presented the Climate Change Emergency update report to Committee and asked if there were any questions.

The Chairman queried the date on 3.2 and asked if it was a typo. M Gaynor agreed that it was and he would change the date to 2021.

Cllr Timmis commended the fantastic amount of work that has been done in a very short time. Cllr Timmis really liked how you can get involved. She said that the Parish Council in her ward has set up a little Climate Change Sector and it will be useful to pass on to them and residents how you can get involved in the newsletter. Cllr Timmis asked whether solar panels referred to the Council's own housing or whether there was support for other tenures. M Gaynor advised that we already have solar panels on sheltered schemes but it does get a bit more complicated on other housing in that you have to protect against the panels disappearing during right to buy sales. However we will be looking at the whole subject as it's an integral part of energy provision and CO2 reduction.

Cllr Timmis asked if Dacorum would say to all residents that we would help out regarding the Green Homes Voucher Scheme. M Gaynor advised it would be their decision as there would be some form of payment. Our aim is to promote grants through the website making sure people are aware of what's available. We would like the website to be a trusted means of communication without a vested interest in commerciality. We had a meeting today with a company who we may use to access Saalex funding, which is an interest free loan.

The Chairman mentioned that he had been contacted recently by a company who have solar panels which feed into a local battery source, which then redistributes the power as and when required. M Gaynor said this is one the options we can pursue with new developments in the future. With respect to insulation and the green programmes put forward by Government, it is a fabric first approach.

M Parr added that as a result of the work we are doing with the Saving Energy Trust, we will have all the necessary information relating to each property in the Borough, regardless of tenure, so we will know what improvements are needed. The modelling will show the carbon emission savings, financial saving and how much it will cost for the necessary improvements.

Cllr Beauchamp mentioned that the local plan will mean that we'll have a number of tall buildings and asked how we can look at inclusion of solar panels. J Doe advised that solar panels are not specifically mentioned but there are a number of policies which refer to energy generation and climate change and it would be something we would explore when considering plans in detail.

Cllr Stevens said that this was an impressive piece of work and should go down well with everyone who is concerned about climate change. Cllr Stevens said that Berkhamsted Town Council is actively pursuing initiatives to mitigate climate issues and asked how we can link into the Communications Working Group. M Gaynor said there are some proposals for Town and Parish Council's and the wider community to get involved because the only way we will get to the Borough zero carbon target of 2050 will be to get everyone working together. M Parr advised that community work is going to be integral, so engaging with residents and business will be important and a Dacorum Climate Action Network (Dacorum CAN) is envisaged, which will comprise organisations involved as a hub on any initiatives or campaigns. However, because of the pandemic it's difficult to plan anything at the moment.

Cllr McDowell asked about energy procurement and noted that we had gone with NPower again, rather than renewable energy suppliers. Apparently, the only way we will get renewable energy will be through Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin certificates, which apparently are not worth the money they are written on and it costs a supplier £1 per household to buy them. Cllr McDowell said could we look at absorbing this costs going forward or reduce our usage. M Gaynor said that this was one of the subjects discussed at a meeting today and reducing the amount of electricity will reduce the CO2. The routes we've gone down at present represent a quick fix but this is not something we'd rely on in the longer term, when we can rely on the increased use of renewable energy across the country and when we will be looking to see the best possible longer term use in procurement, including weaning ourselves off gas. Whilst a lot of research has been happening, other sources of energy are not sufficiently advanced in terms of mass production.

Cllr Silwal asked about the people selected for training in the report and asked if it should be available for all. M Gaynor said the selective element is just for the in-depth training of people involved in the projects, but there will be a half-day training session for all, including Members. The Chairman mentioned that this would be a worthwhile subject for compulsory training for Members.

The Chairman referred to 3.1.4 where extending the heating system at Summer Court is discussed and requested more detail. M Gaynor confirmed this is a small estate with district heating employing a biomass boiler, with other environmental improvements like insulation. It was commissioned in such a way that it has the capacity to extend to the rest of the estate. This only involves 60 or 70 homes but it's a good example of what we can do.

The Chairman said the more of such projects the better. M Gaynor said that ideally it would be a town wide network but it's unlikely we would be able to achieve this. However, we would encourage district and community based heating systems in new developments.

The Chairman enquired about 4.2 where the Government seems to have shot itself in the foot with a proposal which is contrary to national targets of zero carbon by 2050 and suggested that MHCLG drop this to allow the highest energy efficiency standards that can be incorporated into Local Plans. M Gaynor confirmed that the future homes standard proposal is higher than we've had before but it doesn't bring homes up to zero carbon standard, even though it is considerably higher than the old Code 4. The Government have proposed in the consultation that local planning authorities should not have the power to require higher energy standards than those that apply to the Future Homes Standard in their Local Plan. If this proposal is agreed, it will be impossible to achieve zero carbon homes across the country.

The Chairman requested that we lobby the MP. M Gaynor said we could try and we did respond to the consultation to that effect and provide a briefing for the MP.

Cllr Ransley reminded the committee that the Borough has two MP's and suggested that we lobby both. M Gaynor agreed.

The Chairman echoed the earlier comments about the report and said it was stunningly detailed and in noting the report, we should mention the Committee's pleasure in receiving such a good report.