

## CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2023 at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber,  
Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

**Present:** Councillor Rob Yates (Chair); Councillors Bright, Davis, D Green, Huxley and Wright

**In attendance:** Councillors Austin, Edwards, Garner

### 1. PRESENTATION ON THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Mike Humber, Director of Environment, and Matthew Elmer, Head of Cleansing Services, gave a presentation on the electric vehicle replacement programme making the following key points:

- Project progress in 2023 included vehicle demonstrations and testing, the identification of which vehicles should be replaced first and electric load testing. • Vehicle test observations showed that the council would need to use almost all of the vehicles battery capacity each day.
- In turn, this meant that charging infrastructure needed to be meet this demand. It was proposed that a 22 kWh charger would be needed rather than the smaller 7kWh charger.
- Observations carried out also concluded that in some cases the battery capacity would not be sufficient for a full day of work.
- It was important to note that the electric vehicle market was developing rapidly, and it was hoped that battery performance would also improve through the development.
- The council was looking to recruit a project manager to evolve the fleet to electric vehicles.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- Was there a potential for the vehicles to go and charge up at larger public car parks?
- Had hydrogen vehicles been looked into?
- Had researched been conducted into other councils which had introduced an electric fleet?
- What happened to the old vehicles?
- There was a request to be updated on this item in the middle of 2024.

Mike Humber and Matthew Elmer responded:

- Contingency planning would hopefully include this. It would be helpful if the vehicles could use high capacity chargers out in the district. This arrangement would need to be agreed and set into place. It was of great importance not to have vehicles stopping on the roadside due to no battery.
- The electric option for vehicles was more advances. Hydrogen powered vehicles would not be overlooked in the future, but in 2023 the hydrogen powered vehicles were technologically more behind than electric vehicles.
- The fleet in Westminster was completely electric. However, in terms of geography the location of Westminster was perfectly set up for electric vehicles, with constant stop start methodology to continually recharge the battery. Thanet did not have the stop start location.
- The current fleet had a 7 – 8 year life expiry and would often result in scrapping, with some being sold. The economics would be assessed regarding how much it

would take to replace the battery of the new fleets vehicles, and whether the council could sell or scrap the vehicle.

Mike Humber and Matthew Elmer agreed to come back to the cabinet advisory group within 6 months time of the meeting to update members on the progress.

## **2. PRESENTATION ON THE SOCIAL HOUSING NET ZERO STRATEGY AND THE TOWER BLOCK SCHEME**

Sally O'Sullivan, Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Services, gave a presentation on the Social Housing Net Zero Strategy and the Tower Block Scheme, making the following key points:

- In 2022, the council published the intended journey to net zero. These were guided with a set of key objectives and principles.
- Objectives included that all properties were to be EPC C by 2030. This would entail a reduction of energy consumption for residents, and help to offset carbon emissions.
- There were three key principles to the objectives: worst first, fabric first and meaningful resident involvement.
- The first project was started in July 2022, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Wave 2.1. A bid was submitted, and was later known as the 'Tower block Refurbishment and Retrofit Programme.'
- Bids for five out of six of the tower blocks to be retrofitted was submitted in November 2022. These included the following tower blocks: Staner Court, Invicta House, Kennedy House, Trove Court and Harbour Towers.
- The refurbishment and retrofit of the tower blocks meant that they would have retrofitting work to improve overall energy efficiency. External wall insulation was to be replaced, and the council would carry out cyclical works.
- Funding awarded and estimated included: Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund £4.2 million, Building Safety fund £12 million and money from the HRA capital budget £7 million.
- Consultations were held for those in the blocks, residents had a choice of three design options.
- The planning application submission was 28th November 2023. It was hoped that work would start in April 2024.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- It was an exciting project, it was pleasing that the consultation had gone well.
- What was the impact on leaseholders?
- If residents had to be removed for safety issues, was there anything in place to look after them during this period?

Sally O'Sullivan responded:

- It was understood that there was some financial burden on leaseholders. However leaseholders were also given financial benefit for the works which would have to be done at some point. For example, the scaffolding was split across the funding, and leaseholders would only contribute to a small proportion of this.
- The figure of leaseholder contribution was between £10,000 - £35,000. • A full structural survey on all blocks had been completed. If there were any complications, residents would be put into hotels by the council until safe to return.

## **3. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN. PRESENTATION ON THE NEW LAW**

Adrian Verrall, Strategic Planning Manager, gave an update on the biodiversity net gain making the following key points:

- Prior to the meeting, a report was circulated within the agenda. The new implications of Biodiversity Net Gain were noted to have significant implications for the Council.
- The mandatory, 10%, for Biodiversity Net Gain for those qualifying developments would be in place in January 2024.
- The Council was looking to recruit a biodiversity officer.
- A baseline study had been agreed for the district to identify the distribution of differing habitat types.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- It was vital to have an understanding of Biodiversity Net Gain, this would need a strong community approach.
- The key to implementation was effective enforcement.
- Biodiversity Net Gain would not happen straight away, it took approximately 20 years to have the benefits of trees due to the tree's needing to establish themselves in this period.
- Did the net gain plans have to be on site or could a forest be created off site?
- An update for new builds to be eco-friendly homes was raised.

Adrian Verrall responded:

- The plan was to have net gain on site with plans thereafter to move off site. The council was waiting for the final legislation to come in regarding this.
- Currently new homes were being built under code level 4. The council was to some extent constrained via government regulations. Government regulations stated the future homes standards.
- The base line study was expected to take a couple of months, based on previous studies.

#### **4. NEW PLASTIC LEGISLATION BRIEFING**

Andreea Plant, Head of Property, gave an update on the new plastic legislation, making the following key points:

- The new legislation came into effect on 1st October 2023. It aimed to minimize plastic pollution within the environment.
- It entailed that plastic cutlery, plates, food containers and drink containers were banned. The scope was focussed on food and drink packaging for immediate consumption. Note, this did not include meat packaging, or pre-packaged food and drink.
- Within the legislation it was defined that this was aimed at 'single use' packaging's.
- There were consequences of non-compliance, this included fines, criminal proceedings and failure not to comply with notices.
- Thanet District Council's property team held workshops in September 2023. During the workshop it was noted that the legislation was aimed at both businesses and consumers alike.
- Tenants had been made aware of the new legislation, and the area's which would be affected.
- Sustainability clauses were to be included in all leases from October 2023 onwards.

- The legislation also offered an award to tenants which applied, called the 'sustainable tenancy award.' This could be displayed in businesses as a confirmed award.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- How was the legislation going to be enforced?
- How would the council coordinate with trading standards?
- Was the uptake on the legislation and engagement with tenants high?

Andreea Plant responded:

- Enforcement was an issue, and was not a job for the property team, this instead fell under the trading standards team.
- Good behaviour would be recognised.
- Coordination with trade standards would not be direct, unless there had been complaints. The council would work with tenants directly to try and fix issues before this was escalated to trading standards.
- Feedback from tenants had been positive.

## **5. GENERAL UPDATE FROM OFFICERS**

Lucy Rivers, Domestic Energy Officer, gave a general update, making the following key points:

- The recruitment process was taking place for a Energy Advice Demonstrator Lead
- The Home Improvement, eco 4, was soon to be delivered. At the time of the meeting this was in the contract phase. Marketing and events would be pushed around this scheme.
- There were no updates on HERO. This was due to go live in January 2024.
- The Solar Together Scheme was live but due to close shortly. The next scheme will open in Spring 2024.
- The Household support fund was on track to meet the expected targets.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- How was the application process for all the schemes being handled, in previous years there had been complaints regarding households being unfairly turned down.

Lucy Rivers responded that the criteria had been expanded this year. If households were having difficulties they should contact the teams working with the schemes directly in order to gain further support.

## **6. UPDATE ON THE MALLE BEACH RACE**

Luke Glover, Deputy Technical Services Manager, gave an update on the Malle Beach race, making the following key points:

- The event was considered a short beach race, and was 0.25 miles.
- There were stipulations around the event, which included that the engines were not started until they had arrived at the start line.
- In previous years, oil split before the race from the engines was noted as a small amount, and cleaned up with oil spill kits.
- Risks of oil pollution was deemed low. It wasn't likely that oil deposits would come from the exhaust to contaminate the sand.
- It was concluded that other events on the beach, for example the tractors with sand rakes, were much more likely to cause pollutant deposits.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- The risk of extra emission and oil spillages was not necessary.
- It was important to address the future of other pollutants in the future, for example the use of the tractor raking the sand.
- The Malle Beach Race was a one day event which was tightly managed. This event also would bring revenue and joy to the district.
- Feedback to the Cabinet was agreed regarding the need for an events policy which included net zero requirements.

Luke Glover responded:

- The research was centred around oil deposits on the beach, rather than the Co2 levels which would be generated as a result of the event.
- There was a new policy manager starting within the council, this is something that this role would look into, climate change was at the heart of the council's priorities.