

EXECUTIVE

- * Councillor Julia McShane (Chairman)
- * Councillor Joss Bigmore (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Tim Anderson | * Councillor John Redpath |
| * Councillor Tom Hunt | * Councillor John Rigg |
| * Councillor George Potter | * Councillor James Steel |

*Present

Councillors Deborah Seabrook and Catherine Young were also in remote attendance.

EX89 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

EX90 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

Councillor John Redpath declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a 'Friend of Guildford Museum'.

EX91 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made no announcements.

EX92 GUILDFORD CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

An updated preface to the Action Plan and comments arising from the Joint Executive Advisory Board meeting held on 13 February 2023 were set out in the Supplementary Information Sheet. The lead councillor confirmed the report had been updated in response to those comments. The draft Action Plan had been considered by the Council's Climate Change Board on many occasions. The Climate Change Board was an Executive working group that included external specialist advisers as well as other councillors.

On 23 July 2019, at a meeting of Full Council, Guildford Borough Council formally declared a Climate Emergency that required urgent action. Amongst a number of commitments made by the Council to tackle climate change was to develop a clear action plan and timescale for being net-zero carbon across all Council operations.

The Lead Councillor for Climate Change and Organisational Development introduced the report that proposed a programme of actions to enable the Council to achieve net zero by 2030 in accordance with the Climate Emergency Declaration. The draft Action Plan included the development of programmes to encourage and facilitate a reduction of borough-wide carbon emissions, aiming to achieve net-zero by 2050, in accordance with the Climate Change Act 2019. The draft Action Plan included actions to develop programmes in response to current environmental changes caused by climate change and improve environmental resilience across the borough.

The draft Action Plan was the result of four years of work resulting in a blueprint setting out the scale of the challenge, clear definitions of terminology, and it extended the remit to embrace biodiversity and air quality which were not included in the original declaration. Whilst awaiting the Action Plan, the Council had continued to act simultaneously to reduce its carbon emissions across all portfolios.

The draft Action Plan covered all operational areas of the Council and was described as a 'living document' that would be broken down into SMART¹ targets to be implemented in consideration of the financial capacity of the Council and external funding opportunities. The Action Plan would be reviewed frequently to ensure it remained up to date and relevant.

The Executive was asked to pause and consider the scale of the climate change crisis alongside the disruption, harm and cost that was being incurred that would only worsen if action were not taken. Although the crisis was global, the impacts were being felt locally with increased incidents of flooding and severe heatwaves. The draft Action Plan was ambitious which was necessary and would include hard choices to reach the Council's declared goals. Going forward, as technology improved and funding opportunities came on stream, more of the most challenging objectives could be achieved. The Executive heard that those with the authority to make change should do so in the interest of future generations.

It was estimated that the Council itself through its operations was responsible for just 1% of emissions across the borough. The necessity for extensive partnership working was set out in the draft Action Plan. Leadership and engagement with other councils, key stakeholders, business and residents was vital to reduce emissions borough-wide.

The Council's Climate Change Officer gave a presentation to the Executive that set out the international, national and local picture of the climate change emergency and the long-term trends of the Council's emissions that were reducing over time.

The different types or 'scope' of emissions were described. Scope 1 was the Council's gas usage (44% emissions), Scope 2 was electricity (38% emissions) and vehicle fuel (17%). Scope 3 was emissions resulting from third parties with whom the Council did business (11%). Scopes 1 and 2 emissions were included in the original declaration deadline of 2030. Scope 3 emissions would require an extended deadline as there was not yet a methodology in place for calculating or influencing these emissions.

The greatest source of emissions borough-wide came from transportation and domestic heating. The borough-wide deadline for achieving net-zero was 2050, in line with national standards. The Tyndall Centre² had set a carbon budget for each local authority between 2020-2100 and how those emissions should be reduced. Guildford Borough Council had a maximum cumulative carbon budget of 5.2million tons of CO₂ for that said period. If the Council continued to emit at the 2017 levels the budget would be used up by 2027. To achieve the target, the Council would need to reduce emissions by 13% per year.

It was recognised that many factors were outside of the responsibility of the Council coupled with confronting a challenging budgetary situation; but by acting in a leadership

¹ **SMART** is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based.

² [Homepage -Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research](#)

role, providing information and raising awareness the Council could influence borough wide. An estimated budget of £58.6million was projected for the Council to achieve net-zero by 2030 but the total annual savings achieved could be the equivalent of £962,900 per year. This was a broad based, indicative estimate. Funding for the net-zero programmes had not yet been determined but it was clear that the Council would be unable to fund this independently. It was expected that Government and other funding opportunities would become available in due course. Budgetary requirements and priorities would be explored within each relevant service area.

It was observed that buying an electric car to reduce a personal carbon footprint had implications with regard to sourcing the battery materials which was not a carbon-free process. Rather, it was suggested people might driving less often.

There was a consensus that partnership working would be key to achieving, not only the Council's goals, but also those of neighbouring authorities which had also all declared climate emergencies including the County Council. It would also be essential to get the community behind the programme work so that taxpayers clearly understood the reasons behind the actions of the Council and made supporting lifestyle choices.

The draft Action Plan was described as thorough and comprehensive. Consequently, the Executive,

RESOLVED:

1. To note, as set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report, that the indicative forecast of the cost to achieving net zero across Guildford Borough Council for Scope 1 and 2 emissions (as calculated by consultants APSE Energy in July 2022) is £58.6 million and the total annual savings achieved by 2030 would be the equivalent of £962,900 per year.
2. To ask officers to explore how these costs can be met in the short (0-2.5 Years), medium (2.5-5 Years) and long term (5-7 years) and to bring forward further proposals in this respect as part of GBC Annual Budget processes (for example through direct funding, match funding, invest-to-save proposals or borrowing).
3. To adopt the Climate Change Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive as the Council's high level strategic plan for responding to the climate emergency.
4. To note that the delivery of the actions within the plan will be contingent on identifying and securing the requisite funding and resources and on the development of further detailed plans and feasibility studies; and
5. To request annual updates on the plan in terms of progress and any recommended changes to the structure or content of the plan brought forward by officers or the Climate Change Board.

Reason(s):

The action plan enabled the Council to progress the climate change programme in accordance with Council's strategic priorities and the declared climate emergency of 2019.

EX93 HERITAGE SERVICES: VICTORIAN SCHOOLROOM EDUCATION PROVISION AND POTENTIAL SALE OF 39½ CASTLE STREET

The Victorian Schoolroom and Playroom (VSP) provided a key element of the Heritage Service's education provision including outside of the classroom learning experiences for Key Stage 1 and 2 children. Whilst the VSP generated an income it did not cover its operating costs.

Following the pandemic, provision was reduced. Currently, sessions were available twice a week during term time, but with limited resilience within the casual team to cover staff absence. Dedicated resource had been removed following the Future Guildford restructure. Current provision was not cost effective and limited the wider engagement work that could be delivered by this team. Three members of casual staff would be subject to redundancy if the provision ceased.

An operational asset review had been undertaken which included the property used for the VSP provision (39½ Castle Street). The property had been identified, along with others in the vicinity, as not achieving the Council's investment criteria. The proposal was to include 39½ Castle Street in an auction lot, comprising nearby properties.

The Lead Councillor for Customer and Commercial Services introduced the report and welcomed the public speaker for the item who was Nick Bale, Chairman of the 'Friends of Guildford Museum' group. The decision to close the VSP would not be taken without full consideration and evaluation of the options open to the Council. However, over the past years the Council had seen £4million reduction in Government support, endured a pandemic and was now in the midst of the 'cost of living crisis'. In 2019, the budgetary cost of Heritage Services was £1million, next year the Council faced a budget deficit of £5million. Consequently, it was more important than ever for all service areas to consider how they could operate more efficiently. Savings made from the closure of the VSP would provide an opportunity for the team to refocus and provide an improved heritage offer to residents through the Council's remaining assets. Funding received from the sale of the building would be ringfenced to support the Heritage Team for the future.

The Chairman also welcomed Nick Bale who addressed the meeting. The 'Friends of Guildford Museum' supported the museum in a variety of ways. In 2022, the group had donated £17,000 to support the installation of a new IT system and had also paid for the VSP contents 20 years previously. The VSP was the main connection point for the museum with schools which was vital for the museum's accreditation. The accreditation status did bring with it some viability for the museum, but the meeting heard that most important was the high quality of the experience received by the children through the offer which could not always be thought of in monetary terms. Mr Bale offered to support the Council in seeking to find an alternative venue at which the VSP experience might continue. On behalf of the Executive, the Chairman thanked Mr Bale for addressing the meeting.

There was reflection that this was the latest of a number of difficult decisions that had to be taken by the Executive in order to make savings. It was noted that the Council spent a greater amount on heritage services than any other district or borough in the County given the Guildhall, Guildford House, the Museum and the Castle for which no additional funding was received from Government. In real term, Government funding for the Council had dropped by 50% in the past ten years and savings had to be made. Consequently, the Executive,

RESOLVED:

1. To cease the Victorian schoolroom/ playroom education offer in its current form.
2. To release the asset (39½ Castle Street) for inclusion in an auction of nearby properties.
3. To ringfence the capital receipt from the sale of 39½ Castle Street for future use in finding an alternative location for key Heritage Service activities.

Reason(s):

To release resources which can be dedicated to other key areas of the Heritage Service and to generate a capital receipt which will contribute to developing a sustainable offer for the service in the future, including a new location for museum/ gallery activities.

The meeting finished at 7.46 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman