

13 FEBRUARY 2023

JOINT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

13 February 2023

- * Councillor Angela Goodwin (Chairman)
- * Councillor Ruth Brothwell (Vice-Chairman)

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| Councillor Paul Abbey | * Councillor Ann McShee |
| * Councillor Jon Askew | * Councillor Bob McShee |
| Councillor Christopher Barrass | * The Mayor, Councillor Masuk Miah |
| Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor Ramsey Nagaty |
| * Councillor Colin Cross | Councillor Jo Randall |
| Councillor Graham Eyre | Councillor Tony Rooth |
| Councillor Andrew Gomm | * Councillor Will Salmon |
| * Councillor Angela Gunning | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Gillian Harwood | Councillor Fiona White |
| Councillor Diana Jones | * Councillor Catherine Young |
| Councillor Steven Lee | |

* Present

Councillors Jan Harwood, Julia McShane, George Potter, Deborah Seabrook and James Walsh were also in attendance.

67 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

The Joint Executive Advisory Board (JEAB)

RESOLVED

that Councillor Angela Goodwin be elected as Chairman for this meeting.

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Gomm, Diana Jones, Fiona White, Graham Eyre, Jo Randall and Steven Lee. There were no notifications of substitutions.

69 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND NOTIFICATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

70 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Joint Executive Advisory Board (JEAB) held on 24 and 30 January 2023 were confirmed as correct records, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

71 GUILDFORD CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

The Joint Executive Advisory Board (JEAB) considered the Borough's Climate Change Action Plan, which sought to respond to the Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, together with a covering report introduced by the Lead Councillor for Climate Change and Organisational Development. The Executive Head of Organisational Development made some further introductory comments before the Action Plan was presented by the Climate Change Officer to inform the JEAB's deliberations.

13 FEBRUARY 2023

The covering report explained that, at a meeting held on 23 July 2019, the Council:

- Formally declared a Climate Emergency that required urgent action.
- Called upon the Government to provide the powers, resources and funding support to enable local, in addition to national, action against climate change.
- Committed to working with partners across the Borough to evaluate and determine how and when the Council could become carbon neutral, with a target goal of 2030 for reaching net zero emissions.
- Undertook to working towards rendering the Council's activities net zero carbon by 2030.
- Committed to introducing the necessary governance structures, investment plans and officer resources in order for the Council to build a strong foundation to deliver progressively ambitious carbon reductions across its operations.
- Agreed to establishing a Borough-wide Climate Change Partnership consisting of representatives from all stakeholders across all sectors.
- Committed to developing, within 12 months, a clear Action Plan and timescale for becoming net zero carbon across the Council's operations by 2030, commencing with a review of what had already been achieved and plans already instigated.
- Undertook to providing a joint member-officer training programme to enable a shared understanding of how to deliver the above commitments, commencing in September 2019.

The presentation covered the following points:

- Global climate change and its local implications.
- The legislative background relating to climate change.
- Carbon emissions categorised into Scope 1 (direct emissions), Scope 2 (indirect emissions) and Scope 3 (other indirect non-Council emissions).
- Gross emissions data relating to each Scope.
- The amount of emissions per Scope.
- The percentage by source of greenhouse gas emissions across the Borough in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide as at 2019.
- The Council's role in tackling climate change.
- Action Plan example and prioritisation.

The following points arose from the ensuing discussion, comments and questions for forwarding to the Executive:

1. A non-JEAB councillor expressed the view that, although the Action Plan represented an excellent review of the Council's current position with regard to climate change, it was overly lengthy and resembled a 'wish list' of projects and undertakings that would be beneficial to achieve without any particular prioritisation of importance or delivery. However, the Lead Councillor was of the view that the Appendix to the Action Plan outlining the actions, which extended to 32 pages, was not excessively lengthy and shortening it would result in excluding some important detail. The structure of the Action Plan document had been modelled on other similar well received climate change action plan documents.
2. Further to the reference to strategic priorities within the Action Plan, it was suggested that the actions could be 'SMART' to provide examples of what they entailed in the interests of clarity. The JEAB was advised that the responsibility, ownership, delivery, time frames and budget commitments associated with the implementation of actions would be included in future versions of the document when such details had been

13 FEBRUARY 2023

- ascertained. Prioritising and identifying funding for actions would be crucial to ensure their delivery.
3. It was suggested that a governance structure could be introduced to facilitate the implementation of climate emergency actions and it was anticipated that this would include the Climate Change Board feeding into the Executive, which was charged with the delivery of the Action Plan. With regard to officer involvement, the programme and project approach and methodology would be followed to ensure effective planning, monitoring and delivery of actions. The benefit of including a risk register to identify risks associated with the non-delivery of actions was highlighted. A significant risk would be failing to engage councillors, stakeholders and the community in the delivery process.
 4. The Declaration had prompted the proposal to replace the garden waste collection fleet with electric vehicles. Actions that were unlikely to be pursued in the event that the Action Plan was not adopted included the solar energy generation project and the potential renewal of the Spectrum Leisure Centre, which were both intended to assist the Council to achieve its target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Whilst the proposed solar project was supported, the adequacy of the amount of electricity to be generated by it was questioned. Also, the construction materials utilised to create photovoltaic solar panels, including rare metals mined in distant locations, increased the carbon footprint of the manufacturing process. However, technological advances were being pursued to create more sustainable solar panels. Emissions specifications included embodied carbon and that which was emitted in the supply chain, including construction and transport, in addition to emissions associated with product use which would be taken into account. Whilst this was true of solar panels, it was also the case with all products.
 5. In response to a suggestion that the Action Plan was not specific to the Borough and its local issues such as those relating to biodiversity, water supply and energy resilience, it was stated that these factors were not unique to Guildford and affected many local authority areas in the south-east of England.
 6. It was emphasised that the Action Plan represented a starting point to tackle climate change within a framework and was a living document which would evolve over time with a view to meeting related goals, particularly those initially prioritised as the most impactful that could possibly attract external funding. As the Action Plan endeavoured to address the full breadth of Council services and operations, it was not possible to detail every action at this early stage in its development. The scope of the Action Plan could be narrowed to reflect the Council's limited resources and facilitate the implementation of priority climate change projects.
 7. Whilst the Action Plan included tree planting as an objective with a £12,000 value, it was reported that a significant number of trees had been felled to accommodate the M25 / A3 junction improvement and various housing developments in the Borough. It was felt that the junction improvement would increase traffic through Guildford to the detriment of local air quality. However, the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document included a requirement for a biodiversity net gain in all new developments and the Council had set the related requirement above the minimal legal standard. The Borough was utilising every planning tool available to realise a net gain and not a net loss in terms of biodiversity. As the existing tree canopy in the Borough was significant, sites for tree planting were limited and therefore attention should also focus on the expansion and introduction of hedgerows, which absorbed traffic pollution whilst making a significant contribution to biodiversity and creating wildlife corridors. It was confirmed that references to the planting of hedgerows would be added to the Action Plan.

13 FEBRUARY 2023

8. The conversion of garden areas to parking owing to a lack of on-street parking in residential areas was an issue that residents should be made aware of as the additional hard surfaces could cause flash flooding owing to the reduction in natural drainage capacity.
9. With regard to a paperless approach, which the Council had been pursuing for some years and would continue to do so, some members favoured briefer and more concise reports, possibly featuring more visual representation such as coloured graphical and pictorial content, to reduce the amount of written text and paper usage. This would also improve document accessibility for councillors utilising electronic devices with small screens and reduce the number of councillors requesting paper agendas, which would reduce paper, printing and postal costs. However, the use of paper procured from sustainable sources recognised by the Forest Stewardship Council and similar organisations was considered to be acceptable. Any councillors with concerns in this regard should raise them with Democratic Services and IT staff to enable them to be taken into consideration when further devices were procured for councillors in the future.
10. In connection with document accessibility, there were measures which could be taken to improve the legibility of the Action Plan. However, it was a detailed technical document aiming to set the scene regarding climate change and provide justification for actions to reduce carbon emissions. These factors sought to demonstrate to various sectors where differences could be made and secure wider Borough engagement through education and leadership. The Action Plan was therefore not designed to be an easy reading pamphlet or brochure, however, discussions were taking place with the Council's Communications Team in order to create a more simplified accessible version for the public highlighting the main points once it had been adopted.
11. Expenditure required to implement the Action Plan was estimated to be in the region of £58.6 million with associated actions leading to savings for the Council of approximately £962,900 per year by 2030. However, there was a lack of clarity regarding the source of the outstanding balance of funding and it was noted that the Government was yet to release climate change grants for local authorities to apply for.
12. Whilst this meeting provided an opportunity to request changes and improvements to the Action Plan before it was submitted to the Executive for approval, the need to implement it without delay was emphasised in order to respond to the climate emergency.
13. As there had been a reduction in the use of Park and Ride services, leading to the closure of the Onslow and Spectrum routes as they were no longer financially viable, it was felt that efforts should be made to rejuvenate and promote these services, in collaboration with Surrey County Council and bus operators, in the interests of reducing congestion and improving air quality in Guildford. Park and Ride sites offered opportunities for solar photovoltaic energy generation and electric vehicle charging. Although Park and Ride services were implied in areas of the Action Plan, they were not mentioned specifically and that oversight could be corrected. Whilst there was some support for introducing a new Park and Ride facility to serve Shalford, in order to make this viable it would be necessary to consider restricting traffic movements in the town centre and this factor would be partly covered by the Shaping Guildford's Future initiative and the Air Quality Management Area restrictions. An increased use of electric vehicles would also reduce emissions that were harmful to air quality. It was acknowledged that it may be necessary to influence / lobby the County Council as the local highway authority at every opportunity to promote sustainable transport and secure measures to reduce traffic congestion which would lead to improvements in air quality. Such references to travel were included in the Action Plan.

13 FEBRUARY 2023

14. Although the Action Plan referred to Council housing refurbishments which sought to reduce carbon emissions, it would be beneficial to expand this section to capture ongoing monitoring of such activity. As the Council installed equipment such as heat pumps in its properties and gained experience of the effectiveness and reliability of such installations and associated developing technology, it could include relevant information on its website to inform and guide private residents wishing to install low carbon heating systems in their own homes.
15. In terms of public engagement in measures to combat climate change, suggestions within the Action Plan such as the establishment of a Citizens' Panel and the introduction of a Climate Change Hub on the Council's website, were welcomed. It was hoped that the priority regarding public engagement could be heightened in reflection of the desire of local residents and volunteer groups to engage with the Council in order to become involved in projects such as improving biodiversity through measures including planting wildflower beds. It was acknowledged that all had a role and responsibility in tackling climate change and individuals would welcome advice and guidance from the Council as to how they may contribute. The next meeting of the Climate Change Board, scheduled for March 2023, would specifically consider the topic of engagement acknowledging that the Council had a leadership role in this regard.
16. With reference to the action concerning the use of under-utilised land for local food production, some support was expressed for encouraging and supporting residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables in the interests of sustainability in food supply chains. Some councils, such as Tadcaster, had been successful with community growing your own food campaigns and community gardens. This land use concept had the potential to assist with addressing other related issues such as food poverty, transport emissions, healthy eating and obesity.
17. It was acknowledged that, although wood burning stoves were once popular and considered to be a green heating alternative, there were now doubts over their sustainability and they were subject to Government legislation regarding the types of stove and wood fuel that could be utilised. This was a matter of education and not a Council priority to monitor or enforce chimney emissions.
18. The importance of budgetary provision in respect of maintenance purposes was highlighted, particularly in relation to tree planting schemes and electric vehicle fleets to reflect advances in technology. The specific detail relating to such funding would be explored when projects requiring maintenance provision were implemented.
19. It was felt that the Lead Councillor's Foreword to the Action Plan should be expanded to include acknowledgements and gratitude to the Climate Change Board, other councillors, officers and all others who contributed to the document. The Lead Councillor thanked all involved and confirmed that this addition to the Foreword would be made.
20. Although there was an assumption that the local population would be growing leading to an increase in the need for housing and other provisions, related figures quoted in the Action Plan may require review as the latest census outcomes had indicated a decline in population growth and a falling birth rate.
21. It was highlighted that the responsibility for tackling climate change locally did not rest entirely with the Council and that other organisations such as the University of Surrey, Zero Carbon Guildford and schools in the Borough were involved in the associated debate.
22. In terms of the Council's joint working with parish councils and residents' groups, the Action Plan made reference to the biodiversity initiative 'No Mow May' which sought to enable wildflowers etc to provide nectar for pollinators. However, the Blue Heart scheme, which promoted the rewilding of gardens, parks and verges, was also being

13 FEBRUARY 2023

jointly pursued in rural areas of the Borough. The key priority of the Council working with parish councils and residents' groups could be made more specific in the Action Plan.

23. It was suggested that following the local Elections in May 2023, a councillor training session in respect of the Action Plan should be provided as part of the rolling member training programme to inform, update and engage councillors, particularly those who were newly elected to the Council, in respect of the purpose and implementation of the Action Plan.

Some members of the JEAB had submitted their views in respect of the Action Plan via e-mail prior to the meeting and, whilst the more significant issues raised have been incorporated into the above points, other matters of fine detail could be referred directly to the Lead Councillor and officers for consideration.

The JEAB indicated its broad agreement for the Action Plan to be recommended to the Executive for adoption as the Council's high level strategic plan for responding to the climate change emergency, in the expectation that the current document would evolve over time as detailed delivery actions were developed. The Board felt that a regular pattern of formal reporting to full Council meetings in respect of the implementation of the Action Plan should be introduced. Although quarterly reporting on an initial basis was suggested, officers would provide advice in respect of the practicalities of the frequency of reporting, being mindful of the role of the Climate Change Board in this area and the wish to avoid duplication. Such updates to the Council could be provided in the form of a brief summary page highlighting progress achieved in respect of key actions with links to where further supporting information could be found.

The meeting finished at 9.29 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman