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Chairman and Members of the Council

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Date: 16 December 2021

cc. All other recipients of the Council agenda

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL - 15 DECEMBER 2021

Please find attached the responses to the Public and Members' Questions on the agenda for the above meeting:

6. Public Questions (Pages 3 - 6)

To receive any public questions.

7. Members' questions (Pages 7 - 14)

To receive any Members' questions.

Yours faithfully
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Democratic Services Manager

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Council – 15 December 2021

Responses to Public Questions

Question 1

Beryl Wrangles to ask Cllr Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

To ask the executive member for Environmental Sustainability when parking policy will be changed to accommodate RPZs deemed necessary for the granting of planning permission to mitigate the impact of infill development and prevent the deterioration of quality of life for existing residents? I of course am specifically interested in Tamworth Road, Hertford where I have lived for over 30 years, but would appreciate that residents in other areas of the district are potentially similarly affected.

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

We are aware of the issues raised regarding the proposed development at Tamworth Road in Hertford. Our officers concluded a survey in May and June 2021 which determined that the area currently does not qualify for the Resident Permit Zone (RPZ) scheme.

The Council updated the RPZ policy in December 2020, our approach ensures we are able to manage the financial implications of an RPZ scheme and mitigate any unnecessary displacement whilst ensuring new schemes proposed are on a “shared use” basis.

For clarity the approval of an RPZ scheme operates outside of the planning system and therefore the planning permission process does not determine whether an RPZ proposal is approved.

The process requires a formal public consultation with residents and businesses whilst following the criteria approved, the

implementation of such a scheme is not certain until this exercise has been undertaken. It is of course positive that funds are secured with developers should the scheme qualify in the near future.

Officers will repeat the surveys in the summer of 2022. At this stage, given that the policy has recently been updated there is no intention to revisit this policy in the context of proposed new developments.

Question 2

Ann Forbes to ask Cllr Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

You will be aware that we had a very successful COP 26 Community Climate Gathering in Bishops Stortford over the weekend of 6/7 November; we are grateful for the Council's financial support towards the cost of the event. We had to move to a bigger venue to accommodate the high level of interest! Over 100 people of all ages attended over the two days with the express aim of discussing positive ways to improve our quality of life in our town. We were delighted to be joined by the few councillors who attended but disappointed that there weren't more who were interested in joining us to listen to ideas from the Bishops Stortford community about improving our town.

Ten working groups are now established as a result of the Gathering, all under the umbrella of the Bishops Stortford Climate Group, working on a range of topics including Solar advice, Vegan offers in the town, waste and recycling, an Eco directory, Community orchard, Community vegetable growing and improved walking and cycling safety.

In what ways will EHDC further support us in this exciting, community led initiative?

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

I would like to thank Ann Forbes for her timely question, following as it does the excellent work conducted in Bishop's Stortford as part of the local response to COP26. The council was very happy to provide grant assistance and we were impressed by the output from the event.

The council takes a genuinely open approach to working with community groups on the climate change agenda; we know we certainly don't have all the answers.

The council's environmental sustainability officers have been proactive and have already met representatives from the Bishop's Stortford Community Climate Gathering to discuss the next steps to take following the COP26 event and I know further meetings have been booked. I'm very pleased to say that similar meetings are being arranged with groups covering Hertford and Ware, Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford.

Officers and local groups have already identified actions where the council and the community can work together, for example with regard to community bulk purchase of solar panels.

We will continue to make a success of community-led initiatives by, among other things, sharing information, putting groups in different parts of the district and county in contact with each other and identifying grant funding opportunities.

I would like to think that the council's leadership and commitment to facilitating community networking across the district is demonstrated by our work to evolve the East Herts Climate Change and Environment Forum into a more community-focused platform for debate and action setting. The Forum meets every two months and in 2022 we will be facilitating community-led sessions as an integral part of the Forum's meetings to build a sense of wider

ownership of the agenda and draw on the community's expertise and enthusiasm across East Herts.

Council – 15 December 2021

Responses to Members' Questions

Question 1

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

The recent cancellation of the Hertford Hydro scheme is regrettable but given the delay and challenges that the project faced, it is understandable.

However this does mean that EHC has now missed an opportunity to harness clean renewable energy to generate income that could be used to cross-subsidise further activities to cut the district's carbon emissions.

Every month that goes by is a further month of opportunity lost in our urgent transition towards zero emissions, meaning we must squeeze more and more action into the diminishing time that remains.

So will EHC use the capital originally earmarked for the hydro scheme to fund new projects that can both cut carbon emissions and generate an income to cross-subsidise further carbon reduction measures?

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

I'd like to thank Cllr Crystall for his question and I agree with him that it was regrettable that the hydro scheme ultimately proved financially unviable despite the council's best efforts to accommodate the increasing requirements placed on it by the Environment Agency.

Capital resources for the hydro scheme were approved. Given the ongoing uncertainty about delivery, however, they were *not*

committed, meaning that they would have only been made available once the scheme was ready to proceed. Thus, the borrowing and associated costs were not included in the budget and Medium Term Financial Plan and so there are no resources that can simply be reallocated.

I'd like to remind members that the council has made considerable investment in various works to reduce carbon emissions, including energy efficiency measures at Hartham and Grange Paddocks Leisure Centres, upgrades at Wallfields and Buntingford Depot and installation of e-vehicle chargers in the district.

The council will wish to continue to look for opportunities to achieve carbon neutrality and I am always open to consideration of new projects which can cover the council's borrowing costs and make a financial return without undue risk to the council. It is in this way that the council can work towards meeting its sustainability and transformation goals.

Question 2

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

The rapid rise in electric vehicle numbers is already helping East Herts Council tackle problems with damaging air pollution. Despite this benefit, the district council seems to lack enthusiasm for providing residents with on-street chargers. Already we are hearing reports of residents who lack driveways running charging cables across pavements and though these cables are often hidden under rubber mats, there are reports of accidents as people trip over them. By delaying the provision of on-street chargers, we are in danger of letting events run away from us, as more people start to resort to these measures. To help prevent that, and reassure our residents

that we are acting, would EHC consider a small scale trial of lamp-post based chargers, at spots with suitable cabling and where lampposts are close to the kerb edge to avoid such trip hazards? These are already being trialled in Watford and there is no clear reason why this can't happen in East Herts too.

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

I'd like to thank Cllr Crystal for his question. I would also like to assure him and all members that I and the administration share his eagerness to expand access to e-chargers in East Herts.

With regard to on-street chargers, I am aware of examples in the county and am assured that learning outcomes, including those relating to safety and technical issues such as the charge speed capacity, are feeding into the e-vehicle strategy currently being drafted by Hertfordshire County Council. We obviously wish to act in partnership with the County Council given that they are the highways authority and, as with all other districts, we have committed to support the strategy once it is finalised early next year at which point we can determine our approach to on-street chargers.

In the meantime, we have commenced feasibility work with a number of town and parish councils with the aim of applying to the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles for funding to install chargers in various village hall and community centre car parks. If successful, this would see a network of chargers with 24/7 access in localities currently ill-served by public charging facilities. We aim to make this bid by the end of March.

I hope I have been able to demonstrate the council's proactive steps towards increasing access to chargers across the district.

Question 3

Cllr Norma Symonds to ask Cllr Peter Boylan, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

We are all very aware of the significant impact Covid-19 has had upon individuals and families across the world. Can the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods please explain how the pandemic has impacted on the numbers turning to the council for help with housing and how our performance compares with other councils in Hertfordshire?

Councillor Symonds chose to defer her question to the next Full Council meeting.

Question 4

Councillor Chris Wilson to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

The Demand Responsive Transport bus service, Herts Lynx, launched on the 19th September. It has, thus far, been more successful and popular than expected and represents one of the few ways rural public transport can be made more viable for our residents.

Can you please update the council with respect to its progress, and advise what measures East Herts can take to promote it further? And are there any plans to extend it to more villages and destinations in our council area?

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

I'd like to thank Cllr Wilson for his question and I most certainly share his delight in seeing the high usage the scheme is already attracting; there have been over 3,300 passenger journeys since its launch in

mid-September. Usage is steadily rising and indeed a special 'free trip' introductory promotional offer has just been launched to further encourage sign-up.

In the main, journeys are taking place from the rural villages into the 'Key Hub Towns', notably Bishop's Stortford in East Herts, in line with the fundamental aim to improve rural accessibility to employment, education, healthcare and shopping.

I am particularly pleased that 43 extra pick-up points were added in November which saw Much Hadham coming into the operational zone. More pick-up points are due to be added in January. East Herts Council is in contact with the team at Hertfordshire County Council to share views on highly used business parks and the like so as to maximise access to key areas in our district.

Looking to the future, the service is currently being run with a fleet of three minibuses but an additional two vehicles have been ordered with an estimated delivery date of Summer 2022. Furthermore, Hertfordshire County Council has made a funding bid to expand the HertsLynx operating zone. The outcome of the bid is as yet unknown, however, if successful, the operational area would be extended into the south of the district to include Hertford, Ware and the surrounding rural areas.

With regard to promoting the service more locally, we have links on our website and will, of course, continue to promote HertsLynx through social media and our other contact with our residents. Also, I was pleased to see the scheme promoted at the Hertfordshire Eco Fair at County Hall last month and we are aiming to use a similar promotional approach via our partners on the East Herts Climate Change and Environment Forum in the new year. In the meantime, I strongly urge all members to spread the word about this excellent service.

Question 5

Councillor Chris Wilson to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

Since the last lockdown, it has been clear to anyone living near or passing through Hockerill Junction in Bishop's Stortford that congestion and pollution are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Are any figures yet available for the levels of pollution present at this site for 2021, and do you agree it is time we had live monitoring of this site so that we could spread awareness of the issue further and encourage a change in behaviour whenever possible?

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

I'd like to thank Cllr Wilson for his question.

As I have discussed before in response to previous questions raised about this topic, air quality monitoring in the district's air quality management areas is subject to specific criteria and calibration methodologies prescribed by Defra. For this reason, the statistics for any particular year are only published about half way through the following year once discussed with Defra. Therefore, the latest calibrated figures relate to 2020. These are available on our website and show a fall in air pollution at Hockerill junction in 2020, a large degree of which is likely to be due to the drop in traffic during the Covid lockdowns.

The more recent raw, uncalibrated readings up to October 2021 suggest that NO₂ levels are around 10% to 15% higher than last year on the four approach roads to the junction. If this is reflected in the full year, calibrated figures, the air pollution would remain under the 40 micrograms per cubic metre threshold in Stansted Road and Hockerill Street. The threshold would, however, be breached again in

Dunmow Road and London Road although the raw data indicate emissions would be lower than pre-pandemic.

Real time, live monitoring of air quality is an interesting question. In terms of informing action by East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council, the highways authority, the current monitoring arrangements work well as we are able to gauge air quality improvements on a robust like-for-like basis each year.

Given the council's limited resources, we feel it is better to focus on tackling the issue of air pollution rather than investing in more monitoring. To help address the issue at Hockerill junction, we, for example, work with local groups to encourage modal shift to greener travel options. To support this joint approach, should a local community group or any other partner wish to investigate the acquisition and installation of real time monitoring equipment, East Herts Council officers would be very happy to advise of the products available.

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