



James Ellis  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**MEETING** : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
**DATE** : TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2024  
**TIME** : 7.00 PM

**PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE**

This meeting will be live streamed on the Council's Youtube page:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/EastHertsDistrict>

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Councillor David Jacobs (Chair)  
Councillors D Andrews, P Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Carter, N Clements,  
N Cox, C Horner (Vice-Chairman), G McAndrew, S Nicholls, M Swainston,  
J Thomas, G Williams and D Woolcombe

**Substitutes**

Conservative Group: Councillors A Holt and G Williamson  
Liberal Democrat Group: Councillors S Marlow and R Townsend  
Labour Group: Councillor C Redfern  
Green Group: Councillors V Burt, V Smith and S Watson

*(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 24 hours before the meeting)*

**CONTACT OFFICER: PETER MANNINGS**  
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A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:

- must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
- must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
- must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
- if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
- must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.

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### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 1 July 2024 (Pages 5 - 15)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2024.

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Members' Declarations of Interest.

5. Council's response to the climate emergency (Pages 16 - 28)

Paper addressing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's request to consider the council's response to the climate emergency, including actions the council is taking to reduce its own carbon footprint.

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft Work Programme (Pages 29 - 33)

7. Urgent Items

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON MONDAY 1  
JULY 2024, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)  
Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster,  
R Carter, N Clements, C Horner,  
G McAndrew, S Nicholls, M Swainston,  
J Thomas and G Williams

ALSO PRESENT:  
  
Councillors B Crystall, B Deering and  
T Hoskin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Chloe Hipwood	- Service Manager - Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning
Jess Khanom-Metaman	- Head of Operations
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer

65      APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor Nicholls and seconded by Councillor Swainston, that Councillor Horner be appointed

Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 civic year.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Horner be appointed Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 civic year.

66 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors P Boylan and N Cox. It was noted that Councillors S Watson and G Williamson were substituting for Councillors N Cox and P Boylan.

67 MINUTES - 5 MARCH 2024

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Delete in 11<sup>th</sup> Paragraph of Minute 366:

‘Councillor Nicholls said that she had raised the subject of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) at a Buntingford Town Council meeting’.

Replace with: ‘Councillor Nicholls said that she had raised the subject of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) at an Aspenden Parish Council meeting’.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Delete in 11<sup>th</sup> Paragraph of Minute 366:

‘Councillor Nicholls said that she had raised the subject of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) at a Buntingford Town Council meeting’.

Replace with: ‘Councillor Nicholls said that she had raised the subject of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) at an Aspenden Parish Council meeting.

68 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chair’s announcements.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Buckmaster declared an interest in the matter referred to in minute 70, on the grounds that he was chairman of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and a cabinet member of Hertfordshire County Council (the waste disposal authority).

Councillor McAndrew declared an interest in the matter referred to in minute 70, on the grounds that he was the deputy Executive Member for Environment at Hertfordshire County Council, the waste disposal authority.

70 AWARD OF THE WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report inviting Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the awarding of the new Waste,

Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract. He said that North Hertfordshire District Council were the lead authority and would be considering a similar report with similar recommendations.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the waste, recycling and street cleansing service represented the largest spend on services contracts each financial year, and it was a high-profile service that impacted on residents every week. He talked about the impact of the contract on the council's ability to achieve carbon reduction and sustainability aims for the District.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability summarised the decision-making timeline to date and invited the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on and ask questions in respect of the recommendations. He referred to a statutory guidance consultation paper issued in October 2023 to support the simpler recycling proposals that were detailed in the resources and waste strategy 2018. He said that some elements of the draft guidance were not in line with the service changes due to implement by this contract in 2025.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that it would not be prudent to further delay a decision on awarding the contract in the hope that a final clarification was forthcoming in respect of residual waste collections.

Councillor Buckmaster said that he was broadly in agreement with the approach and the design and the proposals. He said that there were variances in respect of recycling across the county and the council needed to move forward.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the absence of food waste in the East Herts collections, which would be addressed within the next two years. He said that he



appreciated the sentiments around three weekly residual waste collections, and he believed that there were good reasons to do that. He said that the change in design would help to increase recycling rates and reduce carbon content.

Councillor Buckmaster said that the additional fibre bin would be a challenge for some people, and he noted that there would be an app available with a push system to remind people what bin to put out on that particular week.

Councillor Nicholls said that local engagement and educating people about the new system was key in the first few weeks and months of the contract rolling out. Councillor Watson talked about the unknowns and potential risks in respect of IT, and asked if these elements had been risk assessed. He referred to the use of different systems at East Herts and North Herts.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that any risks had to be thought through in terms of how they could be mitigated, and this had been incorporated into the recommendations in terms of how risks could be mitigated. He referred to the strengthening of the project board in overseeing the implementation by having the digital transformation executive on that board.

The Shared Service Manager (Waste) said that each council had a different approach to managing the IT integration, and decisions that affected East Herts would be made by the digital transformation board. She said that these types of integrations were being carried out all over the country and had been done plenty of times before with the Granicus system that East Herts operate. She said that Officers were confident that the integration could be completed successfully, and this work would be overseen by the mobilisation project board.

Councillor McAndrew referred to the DEFRA classifications of some cartons as plastics and some as fibre, and an unrealistic expectation from DEFRA that residents sort between the two. He commented on plastic films being added to national doorstep collections by 2027 and there had been no government assessment as to whether the county would be ready to collect and recycle such materials on a sustainable basis. He expressed a concern that some fleet manufacturers might not be able to deliver on the demand for the vehicles required by the contract.

The Shared Service Manager (Waste) said that a majority of bidders had indicated a confidence that they could secure the required vehicles. She referred to the competitive dialogue that had been had with the bidders and fleet providers. She said that the food waste services were due to start in August 2025, which was earlier than the governments mandate of March 2026. Members were advised therefore that the council's vehicle orders should be in earlier than some other councils.

The Shared Services Manager (Waste) responded to a question regarding EV vehicles. She said there was an option to extend the contract at the 8-year point. Members were advised that the EV technology was not there yet in respect of 26 tonne refuse vehicles and the contract had been built around every vehicle under 3.5 tonnes being electronic.

In response to comments from Councillors Nicholls and Clements, the Shared Services Manager (Waste) talked about the transformation programme and set out the advantages of the app. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services talked about the transformation programme and the planned introduction of the new CRM system.

The Shared Services Manager (Waste) clarified a number of points regarding the wording of the draft communications plan following a comment from Councillor Thomas.

Councillor Andrews proposed an amendment to the recommendations, as follows:

Recommendation A - Delete:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Executive to award the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, as identified in Appendix 1 Part 2 of this report.'

Replace with:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the intention of the Executive to award the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, as identified in Appendix 1 Part 2 of this report.'

Recommendation B - Delete:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Executive to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for digital transformation as well as the Executive Member covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract.'

Replace with:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee encourages the Executive to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for digital transformation as well as the Executive Member

covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract..

No change to Recommendation C

Recommendation D - Delete:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Executive to agree the commencement of a procurement exercise for the provision of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and haulage.'

Replace with:

'That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the Executive to agree the commencement of a procurement exercise for the provision of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and haulage.'

Councillor Williamson seconded the amendment.

Councillor Jacobs proposed and Councillor Watson seconded, a motion that pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the business referred to in Appendices 1 and/or 8 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the business referred to in

Appendices 1 and/or 8 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

Full details in restricted minutes.

The meeting returned to Part 1 discussion.

The motion to amend the recommendations, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

Councillor Watson proposed and Councillor Andrews seconded, the substantive recommendations and, upon a vote being taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the intention of the Executive to award the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, as identified in Appendix 1 Part 2 of this report.

(B) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee encourages the Executive to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for digital transformation as well as the Executive Member covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract.

(C) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has regard for the draft statutory guidance in Appendix 6 and taking into account the matters set out in this Part 2 report and any Part 2 clarifications, recommends to Executive to reconfirm the decision on the 3-weekly collection frequency of residual

waste collections made by Executive as per 2.5 and provides clear reasons for the decision.

(D) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the Executive in agreeing the commencement of a procurement exercise for the provision of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and haulage.

71 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

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The Committee Support Officer submitted the work programme report and summarised the items on the work programme for future meetings in 2024/25. He drew Members' attention to the Appendix following the workshop held on 11 June 2024.

The Committee Support Officer reminded Members to complete the scrutiny proposal form circulated by email on 12 June 2024. Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Watson seconded a motion that the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1, be agreed.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reiterated the importance of the completion of the scrutiny proposal forms. Members were advised to submit the forms to Democratic Services as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED** – that the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1, be agreed.

72 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.01 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....

# Agenda Item 5

## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Report by:** Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

**Report title:** Council's progress towards reducing its own carbon footprint to an absolute minimum and identifying a pathway to offset its residual carbon

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Summary** – This report discusses the council's actions in reducing its carbon footprint in line with its commitments in the Climate Emergency Declaration passed by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023. The report provides the opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny members to review the issues involved and share views and ideas about tackling climate change with the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for his consideration.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR** Overview and Scrutiny Committee members:

- a) consider the council's progress to date in reducing its own carbon footprint to an absolute minimum and identifying a pathway to offset its residual carbon and pass any comments to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for his consideration when determining priorities and actions.

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Council unanimously approved the making of a Climate Emergency Declaration, this itself building on the Climate Change Declaration previously adopted by Council on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
- 1.2 A key change within the Climate Emergency Declaration was that although the council maintained its committed to become a net zero carbon council by 2030, the council committed itself to bringing its emissions to a minimum by 2027 with, at the same time, identifying a pathway for offsetting any residual emissions such that members could be confident of achieving a net zero position by 2030.



- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee now wishes to investigate and review progress on these goals. This paper outlines the council's actions since adopting the Climate Emergency Declaration, drawing in large part on the council's latest [Carbon Emissions report](#) which was published on the council's website in May this year. Unfortunately, with the announcement of the general election and consequent pre-election period of sensitivity, the council had to delay publicity on this. It is suggested that members have regard to the Carbon Emissions report when approaching this topic at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 1.4 The committee has raised a series of written questions which this report will address by both reference to detailed analysis in the Carbon Emissions report and more recent work.

## **2.0 Progress on reducing the council's carbon emissions**

- 2.1 This section of the report addresses the questions submitted in writing by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and shared with the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability and the Head of Housing and Health, the council's corporate lead officer for environmental sustainability, in advance of the meeting.
- 2.2 On behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Nahum Clements raised in the written proposal to scrutinise this area of the council's work that, *'Climate change is the biggest threat faced by our planet and is beginning to seriously affect the health and wellbeing of residents and the environment in East Herts. It's been almost a year since 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 when East Herts Councillors passed a motion declaring a climate emergency and pulling forwards the commitment to reduce the Council's carbon footprint to an absolute minimum from 2030 to March 2027. We are now over 25% of the way to that 2027 target but it is unclear what progress has been made, and whether the Council is on track to achieve its commitments'*.
- 2.3 Cllr Clements then went on to list a series of questions which this report will address in turn. It is hoped that these responses will aid discussion at the committee meeting.

### **What reduction in the carbon footprint has been achieved to date and is the council on track to hit the 2027 target?**

- 2.4 In line with many other authorities, the council uses the Local Government Association (LGA) / Local Partnerships model<sup>1</sup> for calculating the CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions from its activity. This model provides an

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<sup>1</sup> <https://localpartnerships.gov.uk/resources/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/>

'industry standard' approach to robust calculations. The sources used to calculate the council's emissions figure are listed in the [Carbon Emissions report](#).

- 2.5 The council uses the 2019 emissions figure as its baseline given that this was the year in which a net zero target date of 2030 was first set. It should be borne in mind that the 2030 target remains, while the 2023 Declaration committed the council to reduce emissions to a minimum by 2027 and put in place, again by 2027, a plan to offset remaining emissions so as to achieve net zero by 2030.
- 2.6 In 2023, the council started publishing a detailed annual report on its performance, drawing on analysis of the latest information. The 2024 report, which drew on emissions data to 2023, was published in May this year. The 2024 report has extended the depth of analysis and for the first time it has included an evidence-based forward projection of future residual carbon emissions along with the council's emerging proposals to offset these.
- 2.7 The 2024 report includes a remodelled estimate of the council's emissions in 2022 which has been constructed using emissions figures for the leisure centres when they were previously fully open prior to their works and Covid-related closures. Similarly, a modelled figure for Hertford Theatre (now BEAM) was used for 2023 while it was closed. In this way, the reported emissions do not include reductions solely due to temporary closures, thus modelled figures only include *permanent* emissions changes arising from redevelopment of the council's buildings.
- 2.8 The council's carbon emission figures since 2019 are given in Table A below. As noted above, the 2019 figure, that is, emissions for 2018/19, has been taken as the baseline.

<b>Table A: East Herts Council's emissions reductions against the 2019 baseline</b>			
<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Total emissions <i>without reduction due solely to (partial) closure of council buildings for refurbishment</i> – in tonnes</b>	<b>TARGET % reduction since 2019 baseline given in the Climate Change Strategy</b>	<b>ACTUAL % reduction from 2019 baseline</b>
<b>BASELINE 2019</b>	<b>2,940</b>		
2020	2,800	5%	5%
2021	2,565	18%	13%
2022	2,446	30%	17%

2023	2,436	40%	17%
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- 2.9 As shown in Table A, the 2023 figure represents a 17% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>e since the council made its Climate Change Declaration in 2019 which set the council on a course to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.
- 2.10 Members are directed to Table 3 within the [Carbon Emissions report](#) for details of work carried out to date bring down the 2023 emissions total.
- 2.11 The 2023 figure is less than the position aspired to in the Climate Change Strategy of a 40% reduction by this time. Importantly, it should be borne in mind that at the timing of writing, the Strategy was predicated on the council beginning to offset its emissions by now. The current position is that the council, in common with all councils, has yet to determine a robust methodology for offsetting – see paragraphs 2.17 to 2.22 below for a further discussion of offsetting.
- 2.12 In terms of continuing to reduce actual emissions, the council has identified the current approaches to investigate as listed in Table B below. The text from the published Carbon Emissions report is given in the table accompanied by updates since publication in italics.

**Table B: Approach to further reducing or avoiding the council’s carbon emissions as listed in the Carbon Emissions report, *with updates since the report’s publication in May 2024 added in italics***

<b>Options to reduce current emissions / avoid future emissions</b>	<b>Current approach</b>
Discuss with the council’s leisure management contractor options to further reduce emissions from Hartham and Grange Paddocks leisure centres.	<p>The council will investigate with the contractor which operates our leisure centres the feasibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reducing both electricity and gas use at the buildings</li> <li>• using the gas-operated combined heat and power unit at Grange Paddocks leisure centre in such a way that maintains the economic benefits of its use while, if at all possible, reducing the consumption of gas</li> <li>• extending onsite renewable electricity production – <i>this relates to the possibility of additional solar panels; discussions about this have already started with SLM, the council’s leisure management contractor</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• switching to a green, non-carbon electricity tariff</li> <li>• using gas generated through anaerobically digested organic matter which may have lower net carbon emissions than natural gas – <i>officers are currently investigating (a) the extent to which biomethane derived in this way reduces greenhouse gases and (b) the feasibility of switching gas supplies to include fuel sourced in this way</i></li> <li>• onsite carbon emissions offsetting.</li> </ul>
<p>Switch to a greater use of low emission vehicles as part of the council's new joint waste management contract with North Herts Council, which is set to commence in 2025/26.</p>	<p>Contract negotiations are well underway. Current, prudent estimates suggest a 3% reduction in net emissions, that is, 26 tonnes. This will be kept under review. <i>Negotiations have now concluded and work is underway to refine the estimate of future emissions reductions.</i></p>
<p>Explore how to reduce gas use in the council's directly managed buildings.</p>	<p>In 2022/23, gas use at Wallfields produced 80 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The council has conducted a detailed feasibility study into switching from gas heating at its main offices at Wallfields, Hertford. The study has found, however, that a switch from gas power to air source heat pumps is prohibitively expensive even with financial support from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Programme. This is the result of two important considerations, (a) the increased load on the national grid would be such that a new electricity sub-station would need to be installed and (b) the costs associated with air source heat pumps and associated works to the building are still very high compared with other options. The council is currently exploring several options for Wallfields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximising the usable lifespan of the existing, out-dated gas boiler in case more generous funding becomes available and/or the cost of air source heat pumps and associated works reduce making the option economically viable</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>replacing the gas boiler with a high energy efficient gas boiler thus reducing, though not eliminating, continued emissions</li> <li>investigating the potential and value of using gas generated through anaerobically digested organic matter which may have lower net carbon emissions than natural gas</li> <li>keeping the air source heat pump feasibility study under review to check if/when this option becomes (more) economically viable</li> <li><i>more recently, the possibility of switching to electric space heating, using the council's non carbon electricity tariff, has been added to the list of options.</i></li> </ul>
Switch the council's business journeys to the e-fleet rather than individual officers' fossil-fuelled cars.	Since the switch in the council's fleet from diesel vans to e-cars, more business journeys have swapped to these vehicles. Work is continuing to encourage and incentivise use of the e-fleet by officers.
Reduce staff commuting by fossil-fuelled vehicles.	The hybrid office/home working arrangements have seen emissions due to commuting drop from pre-pandemic levels. In addition, we are seeing more officers replacing their own cars with electric and/or hybrid vehicles. This will be monitored.
Switch away from the approximately 6% of the council's electricity use still not on no-carbon tariffs.	Options are to be explored.
Encourage contractors to switch to non-carbon electricity tariffs.	Options are to be explored.

2.13 Work is already underway on several of the approaches in Table B. For example, discussions are now underway with SLM, the contractor running the council's leisure centres, about how to further drive down emissions.

2.14 There is nothing to suggest that the council will not be able to bring its carbon emissions to an absolute minimum by 2027 as outlined in the Climate Emergency Declaration.

**What is the “absolute minimum” carbon footprint that the council is targeting, and what is the identified pathway to offset residual carbon?  
and**

**What work has been done to prioritise carbon offsetting within East Herts?**

2.15 The council’s [Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 2026](#) set out the council’s route map to become a net zero carbon council by 2030 and so having a clear picture of the sources of carbon emissions, as discussed above, enables the council to deliver and, if necessary, modify the plans laid out in the Strategy. Table C below shows the level and proportion of the council’s emissions from each source in 2023.

<b>Table C: Functions contributing to the East Herts Council’s emissions total in 2023</b>		
<b>Function category</b>	<b>Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e</b>	<b>% of East Herts Council’s total emissions</b>
Leisure centres	1,173	48%
Waste and grounds maintenance contractors	884	36%
Council’s transport-related emissions – own fleet, staff business travel, staff commuting	197	8%
Council’s directly managed buildings and assets and home working emissions	183	8%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>2,436</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Component figures and total rounded so the total may be +/- 1.

2.16 Further reductions in emissions can be realised from the actions listed above in Table B, however, the reality is that as much as 75% of the council’s emissions at 2019 is, in effect, ‘locked in’ for the foreseeable future given the refurbished/redeveloped leisure centres’ use of, albeit very efficient, gas boilers and the practicalities of transitioning to non-fossil fuelled alternatives to large, diesel-powered waste disposal vehicles. It is worth noting that officers are looking at whether the introduction of newer diesel-powered waste disposal vehicles will yield improvements in fuel efficiency and thus a reduction in emissions. So as to be prudent, however, no assumption for reduced emissions from this source has yet been factored into the forecast residual emissions figure discussed here. A figure of 75% of the council’s 2019 emissions is around 2,200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e and this is the figure that

could prudently be considered the absolute minimum emissions by 2027 although, of course, the council will continue to strive to achieve an even lower figure by this date.

2.17 The need to establish a pathway to offset this level of residual carbon is clearly essential. Unlike when calculating the council's emissions, however, no widely accepted model or toolkit yet exists to calculate how much carbon offsetting the council can legitimately count as a result of its activities and interventions.

2.18 Chapter 6 of the [Carbon Emissions report](#) is devoted to a detailed discussion of the council's approach to putting in place a robust pathway for offsetting residual carbon so as to achieve a net zero carbon position by 2030. In summary, the council has identified four mechanisms via which to offset carbon, these being:

- offsetting via carbon sequestration through trees and biodiversity on the council's own land
- offsetting by facilitating others to reduce their direct emissions
- offsetting through carbon avoidance measures
- offsetting by buying carbon credits

2.19 As discussed in the Carbon Emissions report, each approach has its own complexities which are further compounded by the lack of any established measurement methodologies on even widely accepted definitions of what should and should not be counted towards offsetting.

2.20 Members are directed to Chapter 6 of the Carbon Emissions report for a more in-depth discussion of the potential means for local authorities to offset their emission, including a review of other councils' approaches to deriving the offsetting benefits of their stock of trees, emerging legal advice on what council interventions can be counted towards offsetting and the council's initial offsetting modelling.

2.21 The Carbon Emissions report also refers to the council driving forward discussions on council offsetting with partners across the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). To this end, since publication of the Carbon Emissions report, the council has:

- instigated a research project with the University of Hertfordshire, on behalf of HCCSP, in which the University will review the latest international, national and academic positions, statements and guidance on offsetting by local authorities and bring forward a paper on what activities it would be appear reasonable, defensible and in-keeping with various bodies' pronouncements

to include in the council's pathway to offsetting its residual carbon. Officers from East Herts Council have provided the 'real world' context to academics from the University. The report is due later this autumn

- worked with the HCCSP Manager to further work by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub and Local Partnerships to expand their carbon calculation tool to include a robust means of calculating offsetting alongside emissions. Officers are hopeful of revisions to the model within the coming year.

2.22 While the council does not yet have a clear pathway for offsetting residual carbon, it is felt that the above actions will ensure a robust plan is in place by no later than 2027 as envisioned in the Climate Emergency Declaration.

**What are the key checkpoints on the council path to net zero by 2027, and when does the council expect to hit these?**

2.23 For avoidance of doubt, the council's Climate Emergency Declaration has not committed the council to achieve net zero carbon by 2027; the 2030 target date for this remains. The Declaration does, however, set the goal to minimise carbon emissions by 2027 and put in place the means of offsetting the residual carbon by 2030.

2.24 With regards to checkpoints on the council's journey to achieving these goals, as discussed above, since 2023 the council has published performance on emissions on an annual basis. The report contains information on current emissions, actions that have been taken and are being explored to reduce or avoid emission further, along with increasingly detailed proposals regarding offsetting.

2.25 It is these annual reports that provide the key checkpoints as they, year-by-year, set out the council's expected position in the run-up to the 2027 and 2030 deadlines. Key checkpoints of note already identified include:

- the full year impact of the switch of the council's own vehicles to a 100% electric fleet from 2023/24 onwards
- the opening of BEAM in 2024/25 which uses non-carbon electricity for its heating
- the switch to a greater use of low emission vehicles as part of the council's new joint waste management contract with North Herts Council, which is set to commence in 2025/26
- projections regarding offsetting, expected from 2026/27 onwards at the latest.

**What progress has there been on publishing annual eco-audits of the council's progress, and the holding of an annual meeting? (As committed to in the 26<sup>th</sup> July motion)**



- 2.26 For the last two years, the council has published a report on its carbon emissions. This year, this report was expanded to project likely levels of residual carbon and work thus far to understand how to offset those residual emissions.
- 2.27 Unfortunately, although this year's report was uploaded to the council's website in May, efforts to publish the report were hampered by the pre-election period of sensitivity in the run up to the general election. The report, however, has now been publicised via a press release and through other media in August and it is on the agenda for discussion and debate at the council's next Environmental and Climate Forum on 7<sup>th</sup> October. This Forum meeting will constitute the annual meeting to review the findings; members are invited to amplify the council's publicity about the upcoming meeting.
- 2.28 Through these routes, as well as this Overview and Scrutiny meeting, members, partners and residents will be able to review the latest information and make suggestions for actions as well as show any ideas on how to present the increasingly complex information in the next annual report.

### **3.0 Summary**

- 3.1 In the written basis for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of work stemming from the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in July 2023, Cllr Clements expresses concern about *'a lack of evidence about the progress made to date,'* noting that he, and most probably other members, were not aware of *'any published updates since the July 2023 motion was passed'* nor the *'publishing [of] eco-audits and holding [of] annual meetings'*. Given the inability to publicise the Carbon Emissions report in a timely way, even though it was published on the council's website in May, because of the general election, it is understandable that the report may have gone unnoticed. It is hoped that this report to Overview and Scrutiny has been able to raise the profile of the council's work so as to enable members to scrutinise the work so far and feel able to contribute to the ongoing debate about how best to meet the council's net zero goals.

### **4.0 Reason(s)**

- 4.1 This report has been prepared as a direct response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's wish to thoroughly review the council's progress to date in pursuance of its commitments in the Climate Emergency Declaration.

### **5.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 5.1 Community Safety

- a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.2 Data Protection
  - a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.3 Equalities
  - a) Yes – Members are directed to Chapter 4 of the council’s Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 2026 which discusses in detail the interaction of climate change and equalities, most notably the co-benefits of work to tackle climate change on the wellbeing of people in the district with protected characteristics.
- 5.4 Environmental Sustainability
  - a) Yes – The work identified in this report will improve environmental sustainability.
- 5.5 Financial
  - a) No – There are no direct financial implications arising from consideration of the council’s work to date in relation to council’s Climate Emergency Declaration although, of course, should specific actions be followed, there would in some cases be quite considerable financial implications; any future proposals with significant revenue and/or capital implications for the council will be put to members for consideration at the time.
- 5.6 Health and Safety
  - a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.7 Human Resources
  - a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.8 Human Rights
  - a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.9 Legal
  - a) None arising directly from this report.
- 5.10 Specific Wards
  - a) None arising directly from this report.

## **6.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

### 6.1 Background Information:

- a) Climate change emergency declaration 2019  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=158&MIId=3508&J=3>
- b) Climate change emergency declaration 2023  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=158&MIId=4215&J=5>
- c) Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 2026 [https://cdn-eastherts.onwebcurl.com/s3fs-public/2022-10/Climate\\_Change\\_Strategy\\_2022%20Accessible.pdf](https://cdn-eastherts.onwebcurl.com/s3fs-public/2022-10/Climate_Change_Strategy_2022%20Accessible.pdf)
- d) East Herts Council Carbon Emission: 2023, published May 2024  
[https://cdn-eastherts.onwebcurl.com/s3fs-public/2024-05/2023%20East%20Herts%20Council's%20emissions%20report\\_accessible.pdf](https://cdn-eastherts.onwebcurl.com/s3fs-public/2024-05/2023%20East%20Herts%20Council's%20emissions%20report_accessible.pdf)

### 6.2 Appendices

- a) None.

## **Contact Member**

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## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** Tuesday 10 September 2024

**Report by:** Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Report title:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft Work Programme

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

### Summary

- This report considers topics for inclusion in the Committee's Draft Work Programme. By establishing a work programme of topics for scrutiny Members are better able to plan their future workload, with an agenda which is focussed, maximising the efficacy of the scrutiny process by taking a longer term, strategic view of the issues facing the council.
- A suggested list of topics is detailed in **Appendix 1**.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**(A) That the work Programme at Appendix 1, be agreed.**

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 **Appendix 1** sets out the Draft Work Programme which may be reviewed at any time. Members are reminded to complete the scrutiny proposal form when putting forward an item for the draft work programme.

1.2 A key function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Executive to account for its decisions, to review existing policies and consider proposals for new policies. In doing so, it will act as the Executive's critical friend in the process. The principle power of scrutiny is to influence policies and decisions

made by the Council. Its aim should be to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough targeted examination of the council's services and procedures and make recommendations for improvement.

- 1.3 It has no formal powers to make changes but where a recommendation is made to the Executive, the Executive is required to respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it decides not to accept a recommendation and the rationale for that decision. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) recommends that the Executive has to respond to any recommendation within two months.

## **2.0 Update**

- 2.1 Topics for scrutiny at the following meetings are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 10 September 2024:
- 5 November 2024
- 14 January 2025
- 4 March 2025

- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for a workshop on Tuesday 11 June 2024, to discuss potential topics for scrutiny on the work programme for 2024/25. The following topics were discussed for possible scrutiny in 2024/25:

- Climate Change (climate emergency)
- Housing
- IT and Cyber Security
- Development Management and Community Forums

## **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 Members are welcome to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time. This form is available in the Microsoft Teams channel and provides Officers with sufficient information to assess if it is

appropriate for scrutiny and to ensure that specific questions are addressed. A Scrutiny Flowchart is also available which explains the processes involved in submitting a Scrutiny Proposal Form. Democratic Services will then liaise with Officers and the Chairman to consider the best way forward to address the subject and complete the scoping document.

#### **4.0 Options**

4.1 The work programme will be kept under review by the Committee throughout the coming year.

#### **5.0 Risks**

5.1 The establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 (Section 9). The 2000 Act obliges local authorities to adopt political management systems with a separate Executive. Various sub sections of the 2000 Act set out the powers and duties for Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the right to investigate and make recommendations on anything which is the responsibility of the Executive. Legislative provisions can also be found in the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 2) with options to retain or re-adopt a "committee system" Section 9B.

5.2 Potential risks arise for the council if policies and strategies are developed and / or enacted without sufficient scrutiny. Approval of an updated work programme contributes to the mitigation of risk (and Call-Ins) by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

#### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

##### **Community Safety**

No

##### **Data Protection**

No

##### **Equalities**

No

## **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes - the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's environmental strategies.

## **Financial**

No

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

Yes - scrutiny is enshrined in statute (the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011)

## **Specific Wards**

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 **Appendix 1** - Summary of Topics

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### Programme of Proposed Scrutiny Topics

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Corporate Objectives (LEAF)</b>	<b>Questions/concerns</b>	<b>Scrutiny Approach (Bulletin, Report, rapid review or task and finish group)</b>	<b>Background Notes / Officers' comments</b>	<b>Reporting timeframe to</b>
Climate Emergency	Environmentally Focussed		Standing Item for O&S going forward to 2027	What's has happened since the council declared it. Is the council on track to meet stated aims by 2027.	10 September 2024
Glyphosate use in East Herts	Environmentally Focussed				10 September 2024
Housing				Likely to be affordable housing, but the topic is to be narrowed down via the scoping document	5 November 2024
Performance of the East Herts IT				System/measures taken to ensure cyber security	January or March 2025
Development Management and Community Forums	Enablement	Questions about how the Development Management and Community Forums can impact positively in the engagement process with both residents and developers	Report	Members agreed on 16 January 2024 to receive an update on progress to their June 2025 meeting.	June 2025 (and not later than November 2025)