

Council – 28 July 2021

Responses to Public Questions

Question 1

Jill Goldsmith to ask Cllr Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

The Council has been holding Environmental and Climate Forum meetings in line with its commitment in its June 2019 Climate Motion. These are an important opportunity for the Council and interested members of the Community to hear from independent experts and to discuss progress and ideas for changes to planned actions or additional actions.

How well does the Council consider these meetings are going? In particular:

- what attendance has there been at the meetings?
- are the meetings providing useful feedback to the Council?
- which of the ideas generated has the Council actioned?
- what plans are there for future meetings?

Response from Councillor McAndrew

“I would like to thank Jill Goldsmith for her question.

“After a short break last year due to Covid, since September 2020 the Forum has been meeting every two months. It is making such a significant contribution to climate change planning in the district that I can only touch on the highlights, so please visit the environmental sustainability pages on the council’s website for the full details.

“At each meeting, there are typically around 40 attendees, with broadly 75% of these being representatives of local community groups, stakeholder organisations, town and parish councils and

individual residents. The rest are East Herts officers and members of all political parties on East Herts Council.

“We have had a wide range of experts present to the Forum, going far beyond the ‘usual suspects’, including the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the Heal Rewilding charity, a local resident talking through how to encourage walking instead of short car trips, Affinity Water covering how to reduce water demand and the Garden Organic group discussing food waste. This is resulting in network between groups, for example, at our most recent meeting a community group asked one of speakers to present to their members; he willingly agreed.

“The council has a ‘live’ action plan, with over 100 individual actions, which is monitored and updated on a monthly basis. This is available on our website as are details of the actions already completed. The action plan includes a number of actions and projects suggested by the Forum, including:

- looking into the possibility of digital signage in towns or other technology-based alerts to promote behaviour change such as reducing engine idling and lower water use. Officers are currently exploring a range of options
- making more pro-active use of social media. We followed this up for Clean Air Day and I’m very pleased to say that our messaging reached 11,700 people with over six times more reactions than any other recent social media posts by the council
- working more closely with farmers and land owners. We have established a ‘rural roundtable’ group with local farmers and land owners, the Soil Association and the National Farmers Union.

“With regard to future plans, the dates and topics for Forum meetings until January 2022 are listed on our website with renewable energy and the wider greening of the economy among upcoming subjects for discussion.

“I hope I have been able to demonstrate that the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum is now firmly embedded as a key way in which the council and partners are working together towards carbon neutrality by 2030.”