

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE - 7 JUNE 2022

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 19 JULY 2022

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr Paul Follows (Chairman)
Cllr Peter Clark (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Andy MacLeod

Cllr Mark Merryweather
Cllr Kika Mirylees
Cllr Steve Williams

Apologies

Cllr Penny Marriott, Cllr Nick Palmer, Cllr Paul Rivers and Cllr Liz Townsend

Also Present

Councillor Richard Seaborne and Councillor Joan Heagin

EXE 1/22 MINUTES (Agenda item 2)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 May 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

EXE 2/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest raised under this heading.

EXE 3/22 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions received from members of the public.

EXE 4/22 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5)

The Executive received the following question(s) in accordance with Procedure Rule 11:

1. From Councillor Brian Edmonds, Farnham Wrecclesham and Rowledge ward:

"The Government Policy is carbon neutrality by 2050 accelerating this programme brings additional cost and the need for explicit, deliverable plans. Recent webinars have revealed the difficulty in meeting zero carbon emissions such as Helsinki by 2040 and China by 2060. Ms Koskinen Helsinki's head of the City's climate unit states there will have to be a shift away from driving to reach zero emissions. It is not enough that you change your car to electric." This change at national and local level is likely to prove a difficult behavioural change and result in the loss of critical income streams.

A progressive start would be to encourage less consumption to reduce the 100 billion tonnes of stuff produced every year. Using less should also reduce the

locality's waste a strategy being used by Hong Kong. With a carbon at a nominal cost of £50 per tonnes can WBC deliver value for money.

It would be helpful to understand why funding is the critical issue. Please could Councillor Williams advise why he considers Waverley BC can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 20 years earlier than the current UK target and why taxpayers should fund this accelerated local ambition."

Reply from Councillor Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability:

I thank Councillor Edmonds for the question and will answer the three parts of the question separately:

- Why has Waverley Borough Council set an ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 rather than the current UK target of 2050?
- Why should taxpayers fund measures to reduce the ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030?
- What role do reducing consumption and changing behaviour have in reducing our carbon footprint?

Why has Waverley Borough Council set an ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 rather than the current UK target of 2050?

The simple answer is that the UK government's target of carbon neutrality by 2050 is simply not ambitious enough.

To avoid catastrophic climate change, the world needs to be carbon neutral by 2050. Maintaining a UK target no more ambitious than 2050, passes the burden of holding the world to a 1.5 degree Celsius rise in global temperatures onto the shoulders of the poorest countries who did the least to cause the problem. In the 1850s, Britain was referred to as the workshop of the world, leading the industrial revolution. 170 years on, Britain needs to be in the forefront of the green revolution to save our planet. That is a challenge the present government has not taken up, but it is a challenge that many local councils have.

According to data from Climate Emergency UK, 336/409 councils across the UK have declared a climate emergency (82%) 316/409 councils have developed an action plan to take them on this journey (77%) And 211/409 councils have set the ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 (52%).

Despite the challenges faced by local government, the majority of councils in the UK have set themselves the ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030, of which Waverley is one.

Why should taxpayers fund measures to reduce the ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030?

The costs of catastrophic climate change are astonishing and far outweigh the significant costs of mitigating the impact of climate change by carbon reduction strategies. Recent research at University College London suggested that although there is still considerable uncertainty about how much climate change affects long-term growth, the economic costs of warming this century could be up to 51% of

global GDP. Study co-author Dr Chris Brierley said: “Climate change makes detrimental events like the recent heatwave in North America and the floods in Europe much more likely. If we stop assuming that economies recover from such events within months, the costs of warming look much higher than usually stated. We still need a better understanding of how climate alters economic growth, but even in the presence of small long-term effects, cutting emissions becomes much more urgent.”

Waverley Borough Council, having set a target of net zero by 2030, recognises the challenges and costs of this trajectory. Given that funding is being withdrawn from local government by the present government, we are supporting the various cross-party calls on the government to provide funding to councils with robust, fully developed and costed action plans for action on climate change. Councillor Edmonds will be aware that a motion calling on the government to fund Waverley’s action plan and that of other councils was passed at the last full council meeting. I am sure Councillor Edmonds will also be aware that many of the steps we have taken to date are not costly, they are not even cost neutral, they are cost effective on financial grounds alone. Decarbonisation, cutting energy use, is now cost effective even by the narrowest definition.

What role do reducing consumption and changing behaviour have in reducing our carbon footprint?

Waverley recognise that reducing consumption and changing behaviour are important in reducing our carbon footprint. It is for this reason that

- we have supported the “Take The Jump” initiative which is about helping people to lead more carbon-friendly lifestyles;
- we have supported a more rapid implementation of the National Waste Strategy, pushing the burden of responsibility for wasteful packaging onto the producers with the “Producer Pays” principle
- we are constantly working as a council to encourage the modal shifts in behaviour to a more sustainable lifestyle – for example, through our working with others to develop active transport solutions, pushing for more and better public transport, reducing air travel and building sustainable homes.

So in short, funding is critical and we shall continue to explore every avenue to secure funding for promoting carbon reduction and encouraging biodiversity. And we shall maintain our ambitious target of carbon neutrality by 2030, encourage other organisations within our community to do the same, and encourage our government to put itself at the forefront of the global fight against the disastrous effects of global climate change.

2. From Councillor Joan Heagin, Godalming Holloway ward:

1. As part of his announcement on 26th May the Chancellor announced a further £500m for the Household Support Fund. According to information on gov.uk the existing fund is £421m for the period April - Sept 2022. How much of those funds are available for Waverley residents, and how do they access them?
2. How many Waverley residents are receiving the Guarantee and Support elements respectively of Pension Credit? According to gov.uk this data was due to be provided to local authorities from April 2022.

Reply from Councillor Mark Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets:

The latest announcement by the Chancellor about the Household Support fund confirms a third tranche of this funding. £500m was allocated across the UK in October 2021, another £500m in April 2022 and now this further £500m in June. I believe the £421m referenced by Councillor Heagin in her question was just England's share of the initial £500m tranche. The Government is paying to Surrey County Council the shares of this funding allocated to the whole county, including Waverley, with Surrey then deciding how to allocate Surrey's shares to us and our fellow districts and boroughs. Waverley received £243k from the first tranche. Waverley has worked with its community organisation partners including the CAB, the hygiene bank, the Godalming Rotary Club, 3 Counties Money advice and our town and parish councils across the borough to get this money to those that need it most as quickly as possible. The second tranche allocations, which cover the period April to Sept 2022, have just been finalised with £236k allocated to Waverley. This allocation has a greater focus on over 65s with £175k of the grant being allocated directly to these residents with the balance for general application for families and individuals under the age of 65. This funding is for residents who are experiencing fuel and food poverty and, once the funds have been received, the application process will be publicised by us, including on our website and through our third sector partners. We understand that Surrey County Council is still waiting for the guidance and funding amount for the latest tranche which covers the period Oct 22 to March 23.

In terms of the pension credit, I very much regret that we still have not received the information from the DWP that Councillor Heagin refers to. However we do have some related data, albeit just in relation to residents in receipt of benefits that we administer on the DWP's behalf.

The number of residents in receipt of Pension Credit (this is not all recipients of Pension Credit in the Waverley area, only those claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support). This as at 31/03/2022 was 1148, of which 173 residents were receiving Pension Savings Credit and 975 residents were receiving Pension Guarantee Credit.

EXE 5/22 LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES (Agenda item 6)

The Leader and Portfolio Holders gave brief updates on current issues not reported elsewhere on the agenda:

- The Leader thanked all those involved in the organisation of events for the Queen's jubilee weekend and praised the work of voluntary groups. Surrey continued to lead the way in numbers of Ukrainian refugees being taken in, with Waverley being the largest recipient in Surrey. The Leader was disappointed to hear that the Secretary of State had allowed the application for fracking in Dunsfold, which had been opposed by Surrey County Council and residents across the borough.
- Councillor Williams expressed concern over the decision of the Secretary of State to uphold the appeal by UKOG to drill for hydrocarbons and fossil fuels

in Waverley, which the Council had opposed this consistently since holding a consultation exercise with residents in 2019. He was concerned over the impact on the natural environment, local transport and local residents and the Council would continue to oppose the drilling. The Leader advised that the Council would seek to use all the levers at its disposal to oppose the drilling.

- Councillor Mirylees echoed the comments made by Councillor Williams and updated the meeting on the leisure centre attendance numbers which, although improving, were still 20% below pre-pandemic levels. Officers were working with the contractor on ways to attract more users into the centres. The reopening of the Friday Night Projects in Farnham and Cranleigh was welcomed. NoMowMay had completed and feedback had been largely positive. The newly merged Tree and Greenspaces team was performing well and the increased resilience had been shown in the recent storm response. The Film Waverley project would be launched at the University of Creative Arts on 29 June.
- Councillor MacLeod supported Councillor Williams words on the decision of the Secretary of State; and talked about the high volume of work of the teams across the Council on enforcement issues. More communications were needed to inform residents of the work being carried out. There had been a letter published in the local press recently regarding complaints of noise from residents of Faulkner Court in respect of construction at Brightwells, however these complaints had already been dealt with.
- Councillor Merryweather echoed the comments made in respect of the drilling at Dunsfold. The Council's external auditors had just completed their audit findings report for 2021/22 financial year and this would be reported to the Audit Committee in June. The financial outturn report would be published shortly; and both the general fund and housing revenue account were within budget overall with a slightly better position than that was reported in Q3.
- The Leader concluded by congratulating Councillor Liz Townsend for her award of a British Empire Medal in the Queen's birthday honours list.

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

There are no items under this heading.

PART II – MATTERS OF REPORT

The background papers relating to the following items are as specified in the reports included in the original agenda papers

EXE 6/22 APPROVAL OF THE DISCRETIONARY "ENERGY REBATE" SCHEME (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets and Commercial, presented the report which set out a proposed discretionary energy rebate scheme, to support other financially vulnerable energy bill payers not covered under the main

scheme. The main scheme covered monies which the Council had been tasked by the Government with administering locally through the council tax system in line with criteria set by the Government to all properties within bands A to D. All 9,000 eligible households which the Council did not hold bank details for had been written to and to date, 5,534 of those households had responded and their payments would be with them shortly. There were just over 26,000 eligible households for the main scheme of which £22,570 have been paid, representing 87%.

The discretionary scheme would cover up to 1,444 additional properties and would be targeted at vulnerable residents in bands E to H, as set out in the report and the Council would work with partners in the third sector. Councillor Merryweather highlighted other sources of funding available and acknowledged the work of the team on administering the scheme.

Councillor Heagin spoke on the report, echoing the thanks to the team, and asked that the scheme be referred to as an Energy Rebate Scheme in communications with residents to avoid confusion. The criteria were welcomed but there was concern that those who paid energy bills, but not council tax directly, for example through a private rent landlord, would miss out. Councillor Heagin expressed some concern over the first come, first served approach but accepted that the money needed to be administered quickly. It was important to ensure that the money was spent and did not have to be returned to the Government; and that all communications with residents should be clear. Councillor Heagin suggested automatically crediting every eligible council tax account with £150.

The Leader shared Councillor Heagin's comments on the clarity of information sent to residents. The Strategic Director (s151) advised that the banding of properties was carried out by the Valuation Office on behalf of the Government, over which the Council had no control. He undertook to investigate the point raised in respect of those residents in shared accommodation who did not pay council tax directly and if the Government criteria allowed the flexibility, then that would be incorporated in the Council's scheme. The Council did not have the authority to credit a council tax account directly, it could only make a payment. He also highlighted the other sources of financial support available to residents.

The Leader reassured Councillor Heagin and that any money received from the Government would be distributed as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme set out in the report be approved.

Reason: Waverley has been allocated discretionary funding of £216,600 to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living, but not eligible for the main energy rebate scheme.

Councils can decide locally how best to use the funding to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living. This could include households living in property valued in council tax bands E to H that are on income related benefits or those where the energy bills payers are liable for council tax.

The discretionary fund should be paid out by 30th November, any remaining funding will be required to be returned to the government.

EXE 7/22 HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF FARE SCALES - REVIEW (Agenda item 8)

Councillor MacLeod, Portfolio Holder for Enforcement, Operations and Brightwells, presented the report which set out the responses to the consultation carried out on the review of Hackney Carriage tariff fare scales. The Licensing and Regulatory Committee had recommended an increase of the booking fee to £1, however officers had advised that this would result in short journeys in the borough becoming more expensive and therefore it was proposed to retain the current 60p booking fee.

Councillor Clark spoke in support of the proposals, highlighting the vital transport service provided to residents by private hire vehicles and that this should remain financially viable in light of rising fuel costs. It was also proposed that the DFT guidelines should be adopted to review the fares every 12 months. The Leader echoed the comments made.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Executive considers the comments, the Licensing & Regulatory Committee recommendation and the maximum fare tariff (with modification to retain the existing 60p booking fee) be agreed.**
- 2. the agreed maximum fare tariff comes into effect on the 17 June 2022 (within 2 months of the first specified date - last date for objections on the scale of fares consultation, 18 April 2022).**
- 3. the frequency of future reviews in line with DFT current guidance consultation of every 12 months be agreed.**

Reason: The recommendation is in response to the request from the Hackney Carriage Operators for a review of fares and subsequent comments made following consultation on the scale of fares. It is important to find a balance between the income generated by Taxi Drivers, to cover their day to day costs and the costs associated with the licensing process, as well as setting fares which meet the needs of residents and visitors to the area.

The hackney carriage fare review process has been carried out historically on an ad hoc basis and upon request. Department for Transport guidance on 'Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: best practice guidance' (March 2022) confirms that fare scales should be 'designed with a view to practicality' and it is good practice 'to review the fare scales at regular intervals'. The guidance also suggests that 'Authorities may wish to consider adopting a simple formula for deciding on fare revisions as this will increase understanding and improve transparency of the process'. Further, that in reviewing fares authorities should 'pay particular regard to the needs of their travelling public, with reference both to what it is reasonable to expect people to pay but also to the need to give taxi drivers sufficient incentive to provide a service when it is needed'.

EXE 8/22 APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUPS (Agenda item 9)

The Leader introduced the report, which proposed the establishment of a Cost of Living Working Group to address the impact on residents of the rising energy and food costs; rising inflation; increased use of food banks; supply chain issues; and the cost of providing services.

Councillors Clark, Merryweather, Mirylees, Williams and MacLeod spoke on the proposal. The Leader summed up by highlighted that the pockets of deprivation in Waverley were comparable to any such area in the country. The working group papers would made available to all councillors and that it would bring together Councillors, officers and representatives of the Council's partners.

RESOLVED that the establishment of a Cost of Living Working Group as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report and with the Terms of Reference attached at Annexe 1, be agreed.

Reason: To establish a working group under the current protocol to investigating the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and make recommendations to the Executive as appropriate.

EXE 9/22 ELECTRIC VEHICLE STRATEGY UPDATE (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, presented the report which provided an update to the Electric Vehicle Strategy and thanked the officers involved.

Councillor Seaborne spoke on this item, seeing clarification on the changes made and the consultation carried out. He welcomed the changes but felt that more could be done on the financial and promotional aspects of the strategy.

Councillor Williams advised that the report provided an update, that consultation with stakeholders was ongoing and that the ongoing review of the strategy was included in the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan updates which were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Emergency Board. Officers were working with Surrey County Council on implementation of the strategy.

The Strategic Director (s151) advised that the funding of the chargers varied, in some instances the funding came from the private sector and in some instances the Council needed to subsidise that funding. The Council had its own Carbon Reduction Fund and this was topped up every time funding was received.

Councillor Merryweather spoke in support of the report, highlighting the section of the report which related to financial implications and that the social and environmental value of the chargers was also considered, not just their price.

The Leader clarified that this was a living document and that Overview and Scrutiny had the right to scrutinise any subject within its remit.

RESOLVED that the progress made to date on the delivery of the EV strategy as outlined in Annex 1 be noted. Subsequent progress updates will be incorporated within the annual Carbon Neutrality Action Plan progress reporting.

Reason: To update the Executive on changes to the EV Strategy in the response to the increased demand for electric charging and changes to the building regulations.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.16 pm

Chairman