

# WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2021

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### **Agenda Item 7. Questions from Members**

#### **1. From Cllr Richard Seaborne, Bramley Busbridge & Hascombe Ward**

“On September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, this Council declared a Climate Emergency, requiring urgent action. At the same meeting the Council resolved to instruct officers to provide to the Council’s Executive, within six months of the date of the decision, a report on the actions the Council and the local community could take to address these issues together with an action plan, specifying year on year milestones and metrics to show progress towards achieving the goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 noting any additional costs that might be involved.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, some 15 months later, a Carbon Neutrality Action Plan was brought to Council for noting, having been approved by Executive two weeks earlier. Some delay was understandable because of Covid but nine months seems a lot given the declared need for urgent action.

That plan stated: *This action plan is intended to be a live document and will be updated frequently as required. An update of the action plan will be presented to Executive and Environment O&S Committee annually with the next update scheduled for October 2021 in order to align with budget setting processes for the following year.*

Will the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability please advise members when they can expect to see the update to the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan? Neither Executive nor Environment O&S or its successor committee has seen anything in formal meetings and so it will not be until sometime in 2022 that the clearly stated objective in the plan can be delivered, well after the time for 2022-23 budget setting.”

#### **Response from Councillor Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability**

I am pleased to confirm that the annual update on the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and then to the Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> February and Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022.

#### **2. From Cllr Steve Cosser, Godalming Charterhouse Ward**

“As we near the end of 2021 it is now 27 months since this Council declared a climate emergency but we have as yet seen no hard numerical data with which to gauge progress in that period. The Carbon Neutrality Action Plan published at the end of 2020 was based on a 2015 baseline figure for the Council's operational CO2 emissions. When the overdue update to the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan is released can we be assured that this will contain fully detailed current data that will enable the Council to make effective judgements on how much progress has actually been made towards achieving the Council's stated objective of carbon neutral operations by 2030 and, if not, why not?”

### **Response from Councillor Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability**

Since the adoption of the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan in December 2020, councillors have received regular progress reports on elements of the action plan at meetings of both the executive and full council in the regular portfolio holder updates. An informal interim update of the plan has been presented to Executive members in July 2021. The Greenhouse Gas emissions data for 2020/21 has also been produced and is available on Waverley's website.

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The Carbon Neutrality Action Plan was adopted as a living document and not a fully quantified 10 year plan. The Council has engaged consultancy support for reviewing the trajectory and providing some quantification on key projects, including costs. The revised Carbon Neutrality Action Plan along with the covering report will provide key data to indicate and measure progress toward our target of carbon neutrality by 2030. The plan will continue to be reviewed and updated with more specific numerical data as and when projects mature and have funding allocated to them. This way the Executive can make fully informed decisions on a project by project basis.

### **3. From Cllr Val Henry**

“How much Officer resource has been devoted in 2021 to the task of researching and calculating the Council's carbon reduction targets and estimating the associated costs and timescales of achieving these targets? AND, Is the Administration planning to increase that level of Officer resource in 2022?”

### **Response from**

The plan and its targets constitute a corporate commitment impacting on every activity of the council and therefore requiring officer time from across the council services. As a result the actual overall level of officer resource devoted to it is difficult to quantify.

The sustainability team, a team of 3 officers supported by the Head of Environmental and Regulatory services, is responsible for managing and coordinating the progress on the Carbon Neutrality Action across all council services and managing its monitoring processes.

We are currently actively considering additional resources to support the delivery of this very ambitious plan in order to both focus on the range of key priorities in our Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, facilitate carbon reduction work across the full range of service areas and see through our commitment to developing our waste reduction strategy.

#### **4. From Cllr Sally Dickson**

“Earlier this year, £50000 was allocated for a preliminary feasibility study in respect of the Hale Trail or Eastern Boundary Cycle Path. Please could the Portfolio Holder provide an update?”

#### **Response from Councillor Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability**

Waverley remains committed to delivery of the Farnham Park, Eastern Boundary Cycle Path (Hale Trail). The project was included as part of the Surrey County, Waverley Borough and Farnham Town Council partnership to deliver the wider Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP). The Hale Trail Greenway along the eastern boundary of Farnham Park, had been included in the list of infrastructure improvements as one of the ‘medium term interventions’.

Unfortunately, the sift and prioritisation of this list by FIP has been delayed. Therefore, Waverley, concerned about the need to progress this project in this financial year, has now agreed with the FIP Programme Manager to remove the Hale Trail from the FIP list and proceed directly with the preliminary study. Following an initial meeting with FIP, a way ahead has been proposed. The Atkins project manager is outlining a feasibility study for the FIP programme manager. This study would look at all the aspects of the Greenway and provide a small number of options with rough costings. Following consultation and option selection, the project would proceed with detailed design, securing the construction funding and then implementation.

Waverley remains committed to delivery of the Farnham Park, Eastern Boundary Cycle Path (Hale Trail Greenway). It is incorporated into our Carbon Neutrality Action Plan.