

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT SUB COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment Sub Committee was held at Huntingdon Town Hall on Thursday 23rd February 2023.

Present: Councillors K Brockett; D Cole (Ex-Officio); J Cole; A McAdam (Ex-Officio); S McAdam; A Norton; G Shiels; P Pearce; and S Sweek (Chair).

In Attendance: 1 member of the public

20. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

21. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

22. **ADDRESS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND TOWN COUNCILLORS TO SUB COMMITTEE**

A member of the public indicated that they wished to speak, and it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.

Chris Jordan from Huntingdon Environment Action Team (HEAT) updated Members on the following:

- HEAT had taken over administration of the Eco Huntingdon Facebook group previously managed by HTC. Engagement and group members were gradually increasing.
- A new litter picking group, Huntingdon Green Town, had been set up. The group had organised a successful litter picking event in February with over 20 volunteers.
- HEAT were interested in setting up a Huntingdon repair café. Enquiries had been made with the Coneygear Centre Manager regarding running the project at the centre.
- The date of the 2023 HTC Eco Fair event had been set, and it was noted it would be good to see the event grow and offer additional activities.

With no further comments, it was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to reconvene the meeting.

23. **MINUTES**

Members had before them copies of the minutes of the Environment Sub Committee meeting held on 3rd November 2022 (M2). The Chair asked Members if there were any questions or comments. With no comments or questions, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting which were duly signed by the Chair.

24. **ECO AUDIT**

Members had before them copies of the Net Zero Strategy Eco Audit reports. It was noted that the report gave a benchmark to measure future progress against. The next step would be for Officers to review the action points from each site report and identify short term actions that could be implemented quickly, and longer-term projects that would require funding.

There was some debate on if the reports were worth the cost. Some Members felt the report was padded with unnecessary information, and general recommendations that HTC was already aware of, but noted the site visit reports gave more in depth, actionable recommendations. There was also some criticism on some of the research methods and ways some data was presented.

A Member commented that as a 'green' council, HTC should consider the environment impact of all decisions, including the loss of green spaces. It was also noted that the focus should be on reducing emissions rather than offsetting them.

Members noted the importance of properly implementing the strategy now it was received, and were pleased to hear that Officers had already started work to action the suggested improvements.

It was pointed out that as the reports were based on data submitted in 2021, and as fuel prices had increased in that time, some items such as the estimates for return on investment for projects such as solar panel installation would no longer be accurate. It was noted that costs vs benefits would be reviewed again at the point of starting any of these projects.

Members also discussed how progress would be monitored when implementing the strategy. It was suggested that a report on the council's environmental work could be included at each Annual Town Meeting.

Members thanked Officers for the work that went into arranging and chasing up the reports. It was requested that a report outlining action points from the audit for each Council department be submitted to the next meeting of the Environment Sub Committee.

25. **ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

Members had before them a report on transitioning the Council's vehicle fleet to electric. It was explained that the three remaining diesel vans were tipper

vans, which would be significantly more expensive than the smaller vans to replace. It was also noted that there were fewer electric options available for this type of van.

Members debated the need for purchasing new electric vehicles while the existing diesel vehicles were still functioning. It was explained that replacing vehicles when they were around 10 years old allowed the Council to get a good amount of use, and the vehicles held value to be traded in or sold on.

There was further debate on the pros and cons of electric vehicles compared to other options, as well as the environmental impact of disposing of the existing vehicles.

As the tipper vans were larger than the HTC's current electric vans, it was questioned if the options available had sufficient range and power, and if they were large enough for what the Estates Team would need. It was noted any options would be further researched and tested before committing to purchase.

A Member suggested that HTC also consider green driving training for the Estates Team to help reduce emissions. It was noted this would be looked into.

Members felt that more information was needed before committing to a target for transitioning all vehicles to electric. It was suggested that Officers worked with the Head Groundsman to find out more about the options available and report back to the Environment Sub Committee. It was also noted that this would be covered in the eco audit action plan.

26. **ENVIRONMENT PROJECTS**

The Corporate Officer updated Members on the progress of ongoing environmental projects since the last Sub Committee meeting:

- The date of the 2023 Eco Fair would be Saturday 15th July. Relevant local groups would be contacted to invite them to get involved. The option of expanding the event to include a presentation in the Town Hall was also being investigated. At the 2022 event, the interactive activities such as the Lego world map and Estates Team's equipment demonstrations had been popular, so it was intended to include more at the 2023 event.
- At the previous meeting, Members had discussed a public consultation to find out what environmental projects residents wanted to see from the Council. As there were currently other HTC consultations happening, it was suggested that an environmental consultation be launched in the Spring.
- Huntingdonshire District Council's climate strategy had been adopted. Members were advised this was available to read online. It was noted there may be some opportunity for partnership working across the different councils to engage with the community on climate change.
- Officers had continued to work to reduce waste, increase recycling, and transition to more eco-friendly products across all sites.

Members thanked the Corporate Officer for the update. A Member requested that these updates be submitted as a written report moving forward, and it was noted a written report would be produced where possible.

27. **DATE & AGENDA OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as to be confirmed.

CHAIRMAN