

Public Document Pack

FULL COUNCIL

17 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Councillors Cox (Chair), Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Battley, K Beaney, Bishop, Carr, Chowney, Cooke, Cox, Edwards, Evans, Foster, Hay, Hilton, Marlow-Eastwood, Patmore, Rankin, Roark, Roberts, Rogers, Scott, Sinden, Turner, Webb and Williams.

236. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Bacon, Forward, S Beaney and Fernando. Apologies for lateness received from Councillor Beaver.

237. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

238. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

238.1 Members of the Public under Rule 11

A written question was received from a member of the public regarding the Green Homes Grant. Councillor Batsford provided a written response which was sent to the questioner and published on the council's website.

Any supplementary questions will be taken in writing and the answer published online.

238.2 Councillors under Rule 12

Councillor Carr submitted a written question to Councillor Barnett regarding the sewage leak at Bulverhythe. A written response was received and published on the council's website.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carr asked Councillor Barnett to consider further community engagement with Southern Water. Councillor Carr also asked if minutes of the Bathing Water Quality Group could be made available, and further details on membership of the group shared. Further to this Councillor Carr asked Councillor Barnett to commit to a review of the council's emergency protocols.

Councillor Barnett said that transparency is vital and the way the council communicates with the public about meetings with Southern Water and the Environment Agency needs to be as comprehensive as possible. Additional signage along the seafront is also being looked into.

Councillor Hilton submitted a written question to Councillor Evans regarding Climate Scorecards. A written response was received and published on the council's website.

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As a supplementary question Councillor Hilton asked when the council would be publishing a climate adaptation strategy, as this doesn't appear in the current Climate Action Plan.

Councillor Evans said the next Climate Action Plan update is due in March and the suggestion of including climate adaptations will be taken forward.

The Deputy Mayor took oral questions from councillors to the Leader and cabinet portfolio holders.

Questioner	Subject	Reply given by
Councillor Patmore	<p><u>Harold Place Development</u> – Why is the council deviating from building regulation best practice in relation to passenger lifts in the proposed Harold Place development, and will the council ask its architects to reconsider the design?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said he had been campaigning for improved disabled access for the poorest residents in the town. All public facilities should be fully accessible and the detail of the issues raised by Councillor Patmore will be looked into.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Hilton	<p><u>The Lewes Model</u> – Are you aware of this ambitious Lewes Model retrofitting scheme which is bringing together eight local authorities and will the council lobby Optivo to join this collaboration and benefit from shared learning?</p> <p>Councillor Evans replied that the project is an exciting prospect and the council will lobby Optivo to join the collaboration and take note of the learning.</p>	Councillor Evans
Councillor Bishop	<p><u>Town Centre vehicle access</u> – Given the rise in vehicular activity in the town centre can you provide an update on pedestrian safety?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers said there have been meetings with county council officers and Hastings Police to discuss the issue. There is the possibility of replacing the existing bollards, which are still down, and potentially installing an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera. County council wardens have the ability to issue tickets which they will now start doing. Hastings Borough Council is also looking to provide delivery drivers with a safe place to park in the town centre.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor	<u>Summer Events</u> – As Covid restrictions lift can	Councillor

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Scott	<p>you give us an idea of events we will see in Hastings over the summer?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said that the festival season is now starting in earnest with Last Thursday, a new event in the town centre, beginning next week. The following day Fat Tuesday begins, which is the largest Mardi Gras event in the UK. We also have the Hastings International Piano Concerto coming up. Finally, there is the return of the Jack in the Green event on May Day.</p>	Barnett
Councillor Roark	<p><u>Nationality and Borders Bill</u> – In July we passed a motion reaffirming a commitment to be welcoming to refugees and those seeking asylum. The Nationality and Borders Bill is widely seen as anti-refugee. I ask the leadership of the council to write to Sally-Ann Hart MP and the Home Secretary to formally express our concerns and formal opposition to the Bill.</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said that he would send the letter as requested and hoped to see changes.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Battley	<p><u>Optivo</u> - I welcome the recent walkabouts with representatives of Optivo. Can you give us an update of recent progress in our working relationship with Optivo?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford thanked all Councillors who attended the recent walkabouts. Councillor Batsford explained that the council wrote to the Chief Executive of Optivo laying out key concerns. This has led to some positive discussions in terms of dealing with fly-tipping, retrofitting, litter picking and Disabled Facilities Grant.</p>	Councillor Batsford

The Deputy Mayor called a vote on whether to extend the period of time set aside for oral questions.

RESOLVED (by 24 for, to 1 against): That the period of time set aside for oral questions by Councillors to the Leader, Deputy Leader and other Portfolio Holders be extended.

Councillor Hay	<p><u>In-house cleaning DSO</u> – It was said previously that not all staff would want to, or would be able to, transfer their employment to the in-house cleaning DSO. In order to maintain full-time employment they may have to remain with their</p>	Councillor Evans
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	<p>existing employer and be redeployed, possibly out of town. If these new arrangements do not suit them, they may have to leave their work. So how many hours will they be contracted to and would the increase in their hourly wage make up for any reduction in hours?</p> <p>Councillor Evans said it was difficult to answer as she did not know the personal circumstances of current members of staff. The council will do all it can to keep the current cleaning staff.</p>	
Councillor Sinden	<p><u>Airbnb</u> - Can you provide an update on how many houses are available for use by people in the town? Many residents are seeing rent increases and many properties are being turned into Airbnb's.</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that the rental market in Hastings was out of control as hundreds of homes have been removed from the rental market in the town. The council has lobbied the local MP on the issue of second homes and Airbnb's. Councillor Batsford called for the introduction of fair rent reviews and rent caps.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Carr	<p><u>Castle Ward crime rate</u> – How are you implementing Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and can you also tell us when councillors might get training on Section 17, equalities training, training on the budget and also carbon literacy training.</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that there will be announcements shortly about how the police will manage the town centre. The council is fitting in as much as it can to its councillor training programme and equalities training is currently being organised. Carbon literacy is on the list of potential training sessions.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Webb	<p><u>Southern Water</u> – Can you provide an update on the discussion with Southern Water regarding the Bulverhythe sewage leak?</p> <p>Councillor Evans replied that the source of the leak has been identified as a 30-year-old pipe and the council were informed that it is the first time this type of pipe has failed. Southern Water were going to use a toxic chemical to clean up the beach but this was stopped after council officers raised concerns. There was also a failure to</p>	Councillor Evans

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	<p>consult an ecologist on the clean-up process. Southern Water have reached out to all beach hut owners and offered compensation, however some owners have been put off by the compensation process. Councillor Evans also called for more regular testing of local bathing water by the Environment Agency.</p>	
Councillor Roberts	<p><u>Covid Grants</u> – Could you update us on the various grant schemes the council has been administering?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney replied that there are still a lot of schemes running, although they will be coming to an end soon. Over £97,000 has been paid out in the Local Restrictions Grant Tranche 4. Just over £1 million has been distributed through the Omicron Hospitality Grant. Additionally, over £400,000 has been paid out via the Test and Trace Grant.</p>	Councillor Chowney
Councillor Marlow-Eastwood	<p><u>Consultation on local NHS services</u> – We have had a low take up of local residents having their say on the proposed relocation of NHS services from the Conquest Hospital. Will the council do more to encourage local engagement with the consultation process?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said that there is no clinical reason for the cardiology service to leave Hastings. The Leader of the Council and the local MP have discussed a joint campaign to try to raise the level of responses from local residents. The council is continually promoting the consultation via its social media and newsletter.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Foster	<p><u>Fly Tipping</u> – Does the Deputy Leader agree that we should offer one free bulky waste collection to each resident in order to tackle fly tipping?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said that a review of the bulky waste collection service is included in the most recent Corporate Plan update.</p>	Councillor Barnett

(The Deputy Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.23pm)

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Questioner	Question	Answer
<p>Tony Collins</p>	<p>The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme, Phase 2 (LAD2), is designed to enable local authorities to deliver energy efficiency improvements to low-income households in low energy performance homes, which will also reduce carbon emissions and lower bills. Many said the fund was flawed in design, as covered by Inside Housing in May last year. The fund closes at the end of March 2022. Of the £300m in the fund, the South East was allocated £79.6m.</p> <p>How much of this fund was allocated to this local authority area? How many households successfully applied for grant funding under the scheme? How many household projects i) have been started; ii) have been completed; iii) are expected to successfully access funds?</p> <p>If there is likely to be a significant underspend compared to the allocation and if so what factors do you consider account for this?</p>	<p>Councillor Batsford:</p> <p>The Green Home Grant was split into LAD1A, LAD1B and LAD2. (Local Authority Delivery). The subsequent Sustainable Warmth Fund comprises LAD3 and HUG (Home Upgrade Grant) 1.</p> <p>Hastings Borough Council has led successful East Sussex Consortium bids on LAD 1A, 1B, LAD3 and HUG1, totalling approximately £4.2 million. These rounds all used the same funding model of a direct grant to Hastings Borough Council, who then transferred the funding between East Sussex Warm Home Check Service and Optivo. This funding is due to have supported nearly 500 homes across East Sussex to access energy efficiency measures when delivery of LAD3 and HUG1 is complete.</p> <p>LAD 2 was modelled differently from the other rounds of funding with the East Sussex area funded up to £2 million with approximately £300K for Hastings Borough Council. This money was given to the Greater South East Energy Hub to administer. The Managing Agent initially appointed by them was Happy Energy. Hastings Borough Council officers working across fuel poverty and minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) met with Happy Energy to identify, identification and referral pathways, particularly landlords and the private rented sector in the town. However, Happy Energy were not able to deliver within the constraints of LAD2 and withdrew as managing agent for East Sussex and beyond. This was mirrored in other areas, with E'ON also withdrawing as the managing agent from West Sussex.</p> <p>Recently, Warmworks were appointed as the replacement managing agent for LAD2, and finally, an extension was granted by BEIS with the delivery timescale of December 2021 moved to 31st March 2022. There are some concerns that Warmworks may also struggle to deliver the LAD2 project.</p> <p>East Sussex Consortium partners, particularly the Hastings</p>

Borough Council resource, has focused on successfully delivering LAD1A, LAD1B, LAD3 and HUG 1.

Local Authorities who did issue communications on behalf of Happy Energy have since received some complaints from residents that did not receive the promised work. Hastings Borough Council made the decision not to issue any communications for Happy Energy in relation to LAD2. We did agree that we would do a direct identification and referral to Happy Energy via the MEES project for any eligible households. However after our initial meeting with them we never heard from them again and later they withdrew as the managing agent.

It was felt by Hastings Borough Council and other East Sussex Local Authorities that the simultaneous communications for both the delivery of the East Sussex Consortium programme and the contradictory model for LAD2 had potential to confuse residents and reduce clarity and faith in the primary East Sussex model resulting in the contracted delivery targets of the Consortium Programme not being met. Concerns were also raised for the long-term impact on resident clarity and faith in energy efficiency schemes – an identified barrier to successful retrofit programmes.

Throughout the LAD2 process, significant officer resource has been dedicated to finding a way for Hastings Borough Council residents to benefit from the LAD2 funding in such a way as to support them and compliment the delivery models we had already committed to.

As far as we are aware no works have been carried out in the Hastings Borough area under LAD2, and we have received no complaints of promised but undelivered works. Therefore, it is anticipated that a potential £300K has not been spent under LAD2; however, due to the factors explained above it is not thought that the funding will be successfully delivered.

Questioner	Question	Answer
Tony Collins	What will HBC be doing to recover the £300,000 that has not been spent under LAD2, and to ensure that it is spent on insulating homes? And what lessons can be learned from this sequence of events?	<p>Councillor Batsford:</p> <p>As mentioned in the first response, the LAD 2 funding followed a different delivery model and was not awarded directly to local authorities. It was awarded to the Greater South East Energy Hub to administer. Therefore, this is not our money to recover. It will be for Central Government to decide whether they wish the local Energy Hubs who were awarded the money, to return any underspend and how to use it going forward. In terms of lessons learnt, again this will be for central government to decide whether they use a LAD 2 funding model in the future or whether there are more effective ways of distributing this funding.</p>

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Questioner	Question	Answer
<p>Councillor Carr</p>	<p>I and several other councillors raised concerns to Councillor Barnett during the sewage leak major incident at Bulverhythe this summer around how the public were informed that the water was dangerous and contaminated from Bulverhythe and all along the coast as far as Pelham Beach by The Stade. When we offered to help make signage etc we were told local news items and a post on the council's website were sufficient and that after the incident had concluded there would be a full investigation in to how it was handled, as well as an opportunity for all councillors to be involved in renewing and updating the council's emergency protocols. Later there was also mention of three electronic signage boards that could be used to warn the public during future incidents. I would like to know when this review of the incident is likely to take place, when the review of the protocols is scheduled for so we all can contribute and also more details on the purchase, specifications and proposed locations of the electronic notice boards.</p> <p>Also as we move away from the incident itself, will the council commit to regular meetings with Southern Water that include not just officers and cabinet members but also councillors from coastal wards and members of the local clean water action group in the interest of openness, transparency and community working and in line with the council's constitution.</p>	<p>Councillor Barnett:</p> <p>There are regular meetings already diarised with the Leadership and Southern Water. The last meeting was on 31st January, when disappointingly there were still a number of outstanding actions that Southern Water had not yet completed. The incident in our view is therefore still not closed until these actions are closed. These meetings are also focusing on the long term actions needed to improve water quality across the town, including improving the communication about incidents to the public who use our beaches.</p> <p>In addition the Bathing Water Quality Group is meeting with SW and the Environment Agency. The most recent meeting was on 31st January, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.</p> <p>There are two electronic signs which already exist and operate to tell swimmers whether it is safe to swim on our bathing beaches (Pelham and Marina where the lifeguards are based). Additional signs, both electronic and manual, will be considered as resources allow.</p> <p>There was no commitment to including councillors in the review of the incident. The incident itself was handled well from an internal perspective – officers were on-site and working all hours to ensure SW fulfilled their duties and were updating the public via social media and the website regularly. Leadership gave several TV interviews to inform the widest community. Foreshore colleagues and SW also posted numerous warning signs physically at the site.</p>

<p>Councillor Hilton</p>	<p>What is your response to the Council Climate Scorecards release last week? Hastings comes in just below average and 11th out of the 36 councils in the most deprived areas, scoring lower than many other deprived areas in the south east. See the Council Climate Plan Scorecards Climate Emergency UK (councilclimatescorecards.uk) Please can you tell us how the Council will urgently improve action particularly on the following sections;</p> <p>Mitigation and adaption, Education, Skills and Training Diversity and Social Inclusion.</p> <p>Will the council be using the useful Climate Plan Action Plan checklist created by Ashden and used as part of the assessment process to update and improve the rigour of the Hastings Council climate Action plan?</p>	<p>Councillor Evans:</p> <p>The Council Climate Scorecards were based on our 2020-2022 Strategy and Action Plan. This plan was designed to get us started on our journey to net zero but was only ever an interim plan with the main plan for 2022-2030 to be presented in October.</p> <p>Prior to the Climate Scorecards being published, the Council has had the opportunity as part of the 'right to reply' process to run through the strategy and action plan and benchmarked it against the Action Plan checklist. This identified the areas that will need addressing as part of the 2022 refreshed plan, these areas include Adaptation, education, and inclusion.</p> <p>Officers will be using a wide range of tools to inform the development of the next iteration of the strategy and action plan alongside the checklist. These may include the 'Net Zero Navigator One Planet Tool' created by One Planet and Catapult and ' the Climate Adaptation Tool developed on behalf of the LGA by Local Partnerships; this will help to inform our strategy in addressing the key areas cited above.</p> <p>As part of this review we will be looking to highlight and work on areas of co- benefits, although many of the projects we are involved with already achieve these e.g. addressing fuel poverty .</p> <p>The 2022-2030 Climate Action Plan will be a living document and be regularly updated and refreshed as new technology, policy drivers and opportunities arise that can help our ambition to work towards being net zero by 2030.</p> <p>In addition since the plan was developed in 2019 and subsequently published in 2020 there has been many new programmes and projects that have started to be developed that are not cited in the strategy and action plan – these will be included in the next iteration where appropriate.</p>
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		<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– the development of the £24m Towns Fund Programme and associated projects – in which all projects have to contribute to net zero.-The development of a Green Blue infrastructure strategy to inform the Local Plan <p>We do not accept that mitigation is not included in the current strategy and would refer you to the themes of the existing document which aim to reduce emissions from our energy use for example.</p>
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