

FULL COUNCIL

7 JULY 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, PLANNING & HOUSING

1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING CLIMATE CHANGE, PLANNING & HOUSING

1.1 Purpose of Report

To advise Members that decision making sessions were held on 17 February and 25 March 2020, covering CPH Climate Change, Planning & Housing.

1.2. Background

This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.3. Decision Session - 17 February 2020

1.3.1 Backland Development Supplementary Planning Document

1.3.2 I approved text for a draft Residential Backland Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This additional local guidance will identify the important local design considerations that will be taken into account in determining the appropriateness of this type of development. This will assist all parties involved in the planning process to understand how backland proposals will be assessed. I agreed to receive a further update on the illustrative material to be included in the document prior to public consultation.

1.3.3. Climate Change and Local Plan Review

1.3.4. I received a report on the land use implications of the Council's Statement of Intent, responding to the Climate Change Emergency, and agreed the Council's approach for incorporating Climate Change matters into the Local Plan Review. I agreed to amend relevant planning policies through the current review of the Local Plan; to developing an SPD on Climate Change to support the review; and to the preparation of an Advice Note based on current policies in advance of a new Local Plan.

1.3.5. Low Carbon Energy Framework

1.3.6. I received a report on the development of Solihull's Low Carbon Energy Framework. This outlined initial details of the Borough's Carbon Footprint and the start of identifying the Solihull-specific profile and the proposed next stages of activity, including Member consultation. I agreed to embed the key themes of WMCA 2041 into the Council's Low Carbon Energy Framework approach, namely to: change our economy without leaving anyone behind; invest in the resilience of our places; use our industrial past to create a new future; create places and connections that help us to meet the climate challenge; and decouple prosperity from the consumption of energy and resources.

1.3.7. Climate Change Statement of Intent

I received an update on current activity that supports the Council's Climate Emergency – Statement of Intent and seek endorsement for the Council's approach to ensure it is further embedded into policy and practice, including into the forthcoming refresh of the Climate Change Prospectus. I approved recommendations designed to ensure the Council is able to further deliver the Statement of Intent and noted the need for investment to support and deliver the programme. I agreed to consider a further report in due course.

1.3.8. Decision Session – 25 March 2020

1.3.9. Authority Monitoring Report

1.3.10. I approved the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) to enable its publication. The AMR references monitoring and implementation indicators of the Solihull Local Plan for 2018/19. It also reports on planning policy requirements since the list of indicators were adopted. This includes duty to cooperate discussions, progress on Neighbourhood Plans, CIL expenditure, and self-build regulations.

1.3.11. First Homes Consultation

I approved the proposed response to the Government Consultation on First Homes. The government believe that First Homes are a key means of helping local people, especially young first-time buyers, into home ownership and maintaining strong communities. First Homes will also help widen the range of affordable options for people who are locked out of purchasing homes at the market price. There were two main potential implications upon Solihull arising from the consultation. Firstly, relating to the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and potential implications for the delivery of social rented homes in Solihull. Secondly, the resource implications if Solihull Council is responsible for the delivery and management of First Homes. Our consultation response contained suggestions focussed in these two areas, seeking to address the implications of this government initiative.

1.3.12. Revenue & Capital Monitoring as at 31st December 2019

1.3.13. I endorsed the 2019/20 Revenue and Capital financial monitoring forecast as at 31st December 2019 and noted the Portfolio's progress against the latest 3 years savings targets in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

1.3.14. Decision Session – 30th June 2020

1.3.15. Electric Vehicle Strategy

1.3.16. I refer to the above report and advise that I will provide a verbal update at the meeting.

1.4. Good News and Issues of Interest

1.4.1 Wildlife Ways

The highways and landscape work that I previously reported on has continued as an important contribution to the well-being agenda for the community during the lockdown. I am pleased to report that this has been well received in the community and has been the subject of positive press coverage. This builds on the good work that has taken place across the borough with a completion of a number of high profile routes.

1.4.2 Nightingale Hospital and Temporary Mortuary

I am grateful that planning and building control officers were able to provide early and focussed support in the emergency response on these two important projects at the NEC and Birmingham Airport respectively. This is all part of wider work that the Council is doing to support the wider community in response to the pandemic.

1.4.3 Virtual Planning Committee

I am pleased to report that the Planning Committee was the first Council committee to meet on a virtual platform, using the Webex system. The first meeting took place on 29th April. In two subsequent meetings, processes have been refined to allow an improved, wider public participation in the sessions. The process now in place mirrors the previous arrangements, when face to face meetings were possible. I am pleased that this technology has been embraced positively by all participants, appreciating that the current restrictions necessitate the remote format. The meetings can, and are, being followed by a wider audience via a live link accessed from the Council website.

1.4.4 Emergency TPO – Dove House Lane/Olton Golf Club

Despite lockdown restrictions, I am pleased to report that the planning and landscape teams were able to respond swiftly recently to reports from the community of works to mature trees in the vicinity of Dove House Lane and Olton Golf Club. This swift response led to the placement of an emergency Tree Preservation Order and the preservation of a number of significant trees in the area.

1.4.5. Electric Vehicle Charging

I can confirm that the Council been made aware that our request for funding to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) has been successful. The funding will be used to install 17 new electric vehicle charge points across the Borough the grant funding is for 75% of the capital cost of works, with the remaining 25% to be met by the Council's carbon reduction reserve. The grant award totals £112,060.

Timelines in relation to this project have been impacted by Covid-19 and remain under review. Reasonable target dates for first installations will be agreed with suppliers and our own Highways Services Team within the coming weeks before we engage over the placement of the equipment.

In addition to the new installations, we will be in a position to survey and re-commission the nine existing charge-points within the north of the Borough over the coming months.

1.4.6. Climate Change Prospectus

On the 5th March 2020 Full Cabinet approved a 'refreshed' Climate Change Prospectus. The prospectus outlines a range of actions and activity that the Council is taking to support the borough's transition to a sustainable, low carbon economy. At my request officers are currently assessing the potential impact on these actions and activity from COVID -19 and how any opportunities for a green recovery can be maximised.

1.4.7. Low Carbon Energy Framework

We are procuring some specialist help in creating our Solihull Net Zero Action Plan. This will be a key document in our transition to Net Zero as it will allow us to identify the most effective decarbonisation actions and will be specifically tailored to Solihull's challenges and opportunities.

The Net Zero Action Plan will identify the interventions which will help us meet our Net Zero ambitions and highlight potential decarbonisation projects. It will also help us to continue to identify immediate actions and quick wins to ensure that we are continuing to take action. There will be a discussion paper and Member workshop in October which will allow us to discuss the potential interventions and ensure that Member views are embedded into the Action Plan.

1.4.8. Single Use Plastics Strategy

On the 28th November I approved and agreed the approach to our Single-use Plastic (SUP) Strategy. At my September CPH Climate Change Planning and Housing Decision Session I will receive a report outlining:

- Progress - an update on activity to date
- The impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the strategy and any associated actions.
- A proposed format for the annual report.

1.4.9 Town Centre Heat Network

Earlier this year Cabinet and EDMG Scrutiny gave unanimous support for the Town Centre Heat Network project to proceed to the next stage of the development, based on the Outline Business Case that was presented. The preferred option includes building connections through the town centre with an Energy Centre proposed on land adjacent to Tudor Grange Leisure Centre. The technical source will be a combination of Air Source Heat Pumps, Gas Combined Heat and Power and back up boilers.

The WMCA Outline Business Case application for commercialisation funding of £1.760m was submitted to WMCA on 10th March. In parallel to this, a funding application for both commercialisation and construction phases was submitted to the Heat Networks Investment Project (BEIS) for up to £6.633m.

The project team continue to work with the proposed phase 1 building connections including with Strategic Land colleagues on the new Westgate development to refine the assumptions made during OBC.

1.4.10 Tree Planting

I wanted to update members on progress with our plans to plant 250k trees by 2030. Firstly I would like to highlight the recent 'Tree of Hope' campaign which has been running on social media through the current COVID19 crisis the initiative was a great success, engaging with over 200 families borough wide. All of the families that participated will receive a 'Tree of Hope' whip in November as well as a planting and maintenance guide to help them in caring for their tree.

So far this year approximately 6,500 trees have been planted across Solihull through a variety of different schemes and projects, which have been a mix of whips through to heavy standards. It is surprising how many trees are actually planted in the borough, when you start to collate and coordinate the data. The proposed ward planting scheme alongside other council projects will mean we are on target to plant

the first 25,000 trees this planting season. This year to kick off the #PlantingourFuture campaign we have identified sites within many of our wards for new tree planting. Plans are currently being drawn up for the planting of up to 12,000 trees on a variety of sites across the Borough. I have asked officers to liaise directly with ward members on how they can get involved in these schemes over the coming months as they are brought forward.

1.5. Future Decisions

At my future Decision making sessions I will be considering the following.

- Meriden Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Five Year Housing Land Supply
- Single Use Plastics (SUP) Strategy