

Council
11 OCTOBER 2023

Present: Councillors: David Skipp (Chairman), Nigel Emery (Vice-Chairman), Mark Baynham, Emma Beard, Tony Bevis, Colette Blackburn, Peter van der Borgh, James Brookes, Jon Campbell, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Mike Croker, Joy Dennis, Victoria Finnegan, Claudia Fisher, Ruth Fletcher, Chris Franke, Anthony Frankland, Nick Grant, Joan Grech, Kasia Greenwood, Tony Hogben, Alex Jeffery, Liz Kitchen, Joanne Knowles, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Dennis Livingstone, Alan Manton, Nicholas Marks, Jay Mercer, John Milne, Colin Minto, Roger Noel, Jon Olson, Josh Potts, Sam Raby, Jonathan Taylor, John Trollope, Clive Trott, Belinda Walters and Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: Sam Bateman, Martin Boffey, Malcolm Eastwood, Len Ellis-Brown, Warwick Hellowell and Mike Wood

CO/46 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 6 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CO/47 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Item 10 Notice of Motion: Councillor Joy Dennis declared that she had an interest in relation to the motion on Gatwick Airport, as a West Sussex County Councillor, and Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport.

CO/48 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor David Skipp, Chairman of the Council, thanked those that attended the Civic Service and noted that there was good representation from a number of organisations.

Councillor John Milne, Deputy Leader, announced that the Leader had appointed Councillor Nick Grant as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing, announced that a Cost of Living Summit would be held on 2 November to meet with partners and other stakeholders to develop an understanding of the state of the cost of living crisis in the District, to identify actions, and to understand barriers that could impact progress. The result of the summit would inform the 2024/25 Annual Plan.

Councillor Jon Olson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces gave an overview of activities that would be available to families during the

forthcoming half term break. This included activities taking place in Southwater Country Park, Horsham Museum, the Capitol, Warnham Nature Reserve and Horsham Youth Centre. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the cost of living crisis, and as such there was a focus on affordable activities.

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, advised that improved health check arrangements for taxi drivers would be introduced, as well as six monthly vehicle safety checks at the Depot. Progress had been made in relation to the introduction of an app that would enable residents to find out what can be recycled and where, as well as including information about bin collections.

Councillor Colette Blackburn, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Nature Recovery, reported on the positive outcomes that were being achieved for nature through the Wilder Horsham District initiative. It was highlighted that the business consultation on the Climate Action Strategy was open, and those that had contributed were thanked.

CO/49 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions relevant to the business of the meeting had been received.

CO/50 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET**

THE COUNCIL PLAN 2023-27, THE ANNUAL PLAN 2023-24 AND THEIR RESOURCING

Councillor John Milne, Deputy Leader, introduced the Council Plan and the Annual Plan, and noted that the vision was to ensure that residents were supported, businesses were encouraged and visitors were welcomed. Ensuring that the District was a great place to live for all groups was a priority. The Council Plan set out a shared vision, set out under 4 main themes. A revised Annual Plan was presented for the remainder of the financial year. The Annual Plan would enable the Council to be flexible, and the consideration of the Annual Plan with the budget would ensure transparency and accountability.

It was proposed that funding for two posts for Project Management in the Property team would be provided. This would ensure that progress is made against projects in the capital programme.

Councillor Dennis Livingstone seconded the proposal and spoke in support of the objectives.

Members spoke in support of the recommendations, with a particular focus on the importance of improving greener futures. Flexible working investment was discussed, and the anticipated support this would provide to the economy of the town, and villages in the District.

RESOLVED

- (i) That both plans be adopted, as approved.
- (ii) That £48,010 expenditure for the two new posts, outlined in section 3 of the Cabinet report, be added to the budget for 2023/24.

REASONS

- (i) The Council must have a policy framework on which to base its decisions. The Council Plan and Annual Plan are the core documents of this framework.
- (ii) The Council needs enough staff in project management and property to progress the current year's capital programme and new projects in the Annual Plan.

CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATIONS: HORSHAM (PARK TERRACE GARDENS)

Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, proposed that Park Terrace Gardens be designated as a conservation area, due to the intact Victorian heritage and detailing. The Council were advised that wide public consultation had taken place in relation to the proposed conservation area, and those that submitted responses were thanked. The area was amended as a result of the consultation to ensure that the boundary was robust, and the removal of the business area would ensure that these businesses would be able to adapt to the changing commercial environment. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Anthony Frankland.

Members thanked the community for their involvement throughout the consultation period, and offered their support to the proposal, highlighting the importance of the conservation of historical areas.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the designation of Park Terrace Gardens, (as shown on the Conservation Area designation map (Map 1) included in the Cabinet report) be approved as a conservation area.
- (ii) That the adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Park Terrace Gardens, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.
- (iii) That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure to approve minor changes prior to final publication of the Conservation Area designation map and Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

REASONS

- (i) To formally designate the new conservation area boundary.
- (ii) To provide updated conservation area guidance for residents, occupiers, developers and Members in determining applications.
- (iii) To give the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure delegated authority to approve minor changes to the Conservation Area designation map and Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan, without the need for it to be referred back to Cabinet.

SUPPLY OF TYRES AND ASSOCIATED PARTS & SERVICES FOR HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL & CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, advised that a procurement process had been undertaken jointly with Crawley Borough Council for the supply of tyres and association parts and services. The Cabinet approved the award of a contract to the highest scoring bidder at their last meeting. The Council were asked to increase the recycling and waste tyre budget to cover the increased costs of this contract. It was noted that this was due to rising costs, and that the current budget was forecast to be overspent.

Councillor James Brookes seconded the motion.

RESOLVED

That the recycling and waste tyre budget be increased in 2023/24 by £6,600 to cover the expected higher costs under the new contract.

REASONS

Full Council must approve budget changes.

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AND GRANT ALLOCATION

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, explained that there had been a national top up for the Disabled Facilities Grant for 2023-24 and the Council were notified that they would receive an additional £122,495. The Cabinet had agreed that the fund would be allocated under existing policies. Councillor Joanne Knowles seconded the motion to receive the Grant, and for it to be included in the capital programme budget. The importance of the fund was highlighted, as it would provide home adaptations to those who were elderly or disabled.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the receipt of the 2023/2024 Disabled Facilities Grant in the sum of £122,495, be approved.
- (ii) That an increase in the 2023/2024 capital programme budget to include the additional £122,495 Disabled Facilities Grant, be approved.

REASONS

- (i) Increasing the capital budget will allow the Council to receive and spend the disabled facilities grant offered by Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. This will fund the provision of home adaptations to help eligible older and disabled people to live as independently and safely as possible in their homes.
- (ii) Full Council must approve increases to budgets.
- (iii) Cabinet approval is required to (i) allocate the grant funds, and, (ii) delegate authority to the relevant officer to administer grant applications in line with existing policy. The allocation of grant funds constitutes a key decision given the allocation of the grant fund pot could significantly affect the lives of people residing in the district.

CO/51 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES**

TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS TO PARISH COUNCILS

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, informed Members that should a parish council become inquorate, the Council can appoint a Member of the District Council to the relevant parish council, to render them quorate. It was proposed that authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make temporary appointments, in order to minimise any inquorate period, and to negate the requirement to consider the matters at Council meetings. Councillor James Brookes seconded the motion and spoke in support of the motion. He highlighted that this approach would be more efficient, and enable parish councils to continue to conduct business.

RESOLVED

That authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make temporary appointments to parish councils under section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972.

REASON

Granting the Returning Officer authority to make temporary appointments to parish councils should (i) minimise the period within which a parish council is inquorate and so unable to carry out any business, as Council would otherwise be required to meet and approve the temporary appointment,

and, (ii) negate the requirement to convene council meetings to consider and make such appointments.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, outlined the proposals in relation to revised public speaking arrangements at Council meetings. The proposals would enable the public to ask a question in relation to any matter that the Council has responsibility for, or specifically affects the District, which would replace the requirement for questions to be limited to the business of the meeting. The Head of Paid Service would be able to reject a question if it had been put at any meeting of the Council or Cabinet in the preceding six months. It was proposed that there would be provision for questions at Extraordinary Council meetings, and these would be limited to the business of the meeting.

Councillor Walters requested the consent of the meeting to alter recommendation (i). It was proposed that provision would be made for the Head of Paid Service to reject a question, where in their opinion, the question related to personal and/or inappropriate matters of the speaker. Councillor Jay Mercer seconded the proposals.

Members supported the proposals, whilst noting that the terms “inappropriate”, and “affects the District” could be open to interpretation. It was agreed that speaking arrangements at meetings would be kept under review.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the changes recommended by the Committee be approved and adopted, as detailed in Appendix D to the report with the addition of the following wording in 4j 1.5 Scope of questions:
 - e) in the opinion of the Head of Paid Service, relates to personal and/or inappropriate matters of the speaker.
- (ii) That any adopted changes will be reflected in the Constitution be noted, per the Monitoring Officer’s authority to implement any such revisions pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 13.3 b) 3 of the Constitution.

REASON

- (i) To review public speaking rights at ordinary and extraordinary Council meetings and adopt any revisions considered appropriate.
- (ii) It is good practice for councils to keep their constitutions and arrangements under regular review.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT CABINET MEETINGS

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, outlined the proposals in relation to revised public speaking arrangements at meetings of the Cabinet. The proposals would enable the public to ask a question in relation to any matter that the Council has responsibility for, or specifically affects the District, rather than questions being limited to the business of the meeting. The Head of Paid Service would be able to reject a question if it had been put at any meeting of the Council or Cabinet in the preceding six months, or related to personal and/or inappropriate matters of the speaker. It was proposed that there would be provision for questions at special Cabinet meetings, and these would be limited to the business of the meeting.

Councillor James Brookes seconded the proposals, and highlighted that the proposed changes would broaden the scope and involvement of the public in democracy.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the changes recommended by the Committee be approved and adopted, as detailed in Appendix D to the report with the addition of the following wording in 4j 4.5 Scope of questions:
 - e) in the opinion of the Head of Paid Service, relates to personal and/or inappropriate matters of the speaker.
- (ii) That any adopted changes will be reflected in the Constitution be noted, per the Monitoring Officer's authority to implement any such revisions pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 13.3 b) 3 of the Constitution.

REASON

- (i) To review public speaking rights at ordinary and special Cabinet meetings and adopt any revisions considered appropriate.
- (ii) It is good practice for councils to keep their constitutions and arrangements under regular review.

DELEGATIONS TO CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (SECTION 151 OFFICER)

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, advised Members that it was proposed that the Chief Finance Officer be delegated further authority to receive and allocate grant funding. Any decisions made within the provisions of the delegated authority, would be made with the Leader of the Council, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, and the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The proposals would enhance operational efficiency, and Members were advised that the threshold amounts were proportionate and reasonable in the context of the Council's overall budget.

The proposals were seconded by Councillor James Brookes. Councillor Paul Clarke, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny, spoke in support of the proposals and stated that he was content that the proposals did not weaken the safeguards in place.

RESOLVED

- (i) That it be approved that the delegation to the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), in paragraph 10 of section 3.5.2 of Part Three of the Constitution be removed and replaced by the following:

“10. With the Leader of the Council, to approve the receipt and consequent expenditure and/or allocation (as the case may be) of grant monies for new projects or new service areas for which there is no provision in the Council’s budget up to a threshold of £100,000 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

11. With the Leader of the Council, to approve the receipt and consequent expenditure and/or allocation (as the case may be) of grant monies for existing projects or existing service areas for which there is no provision in the Council’s budget up to a threshold of £249,999 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.”

- (ii) That an additional delegation to the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) be included in section 3.5.2 of Part Three of the Constitution as follows:

“12. With the Leader of the Council, to be authorised to make decisions relating to any other income or expenditure for which there is no provision in the Council’s budget up to a threshold of £100,000 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, such income or expenditure being the gross amount.”

REASON

The recommendations will further streamline the decision-making process by allowing certain decisions to be made by the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) and the Leader of the Council in a timely manner without the need to obtain prior approval from Council. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have oversight of these decisions.

ELECTRONIC VOTING

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, explained that the Committee had considered the proposal to use an electronic voting system

at Full Council meetings. At present, Members raised their hands to vote, and the vote would be counted by the Democratic Services team. The team do not always have a clear vantage point of raised hands, due to the configuration of the Council's chamber. The proposed system would enable Members to vote using a touchscreen display on their microphones. The total number of votes would be displayed on a screen and the result would be declared by the Chairman. The proposals were seconded by Councillor James Brookes.

Members discussed the proposals, and some Members spoke in support, highlighting the efficiencies it would offer. Members raised concerns however in relation to transparency, as members of the public would not be able to identify how individual councillors have voted. It was suggested that under this system, there was the possibility of holding every vote as a recorded vote.

It was suggested that the expenditure was not necessary, with consideration to the current financial situation. Concerns were raised in relation to how the system would work, and the training required.

Councillor John Milne proposed that the decision be DEFERRED, and further proposed it be REFERRED to the Governance Committee (under rule 4a. 16(f) of the Constitution), to allow Members to examine the specific system that would be implemented. Councillor Colin Minto seconded the motion. The proposal to refer the Motion was put to the vote and was CARRIED.

CO/52 **REPORT ON SPECIAL URGENCY DECISION**

Councillor John Milne, Deputy Leader, advised the Council that the Cabinet had taken an urgent decision at its last meeting. The decision was in relation to works at Swan Walk Car Park and was urgent given the need to avoid further deterioration of the car park surface. If remedial work was not taken there could be safety concerns and the top deck spaces were required for the Christmas season. Councillor Skipp seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

REASONS

- i) To report that cabinet made an urgent decision
- ii) To ensure constitutional compliance

CO/53 **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

The representative of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Councillor Joan Grech, gave an overview of the Authority, including its responsibilities and priorities, as well as funding that was available. It was reported that investment in the Seven Sisters Country Park would continue,

which included the upgrade of facilities and improvements to natural habitats on the site. The Authority had ambitions to open another visitor destination in the west of the Park, should an opportunity arise. The SDNPA had begun to review their Local Plan, which was expected to be ready for Regulation 18 consultation in 2025. Councillor Grech would present the Council's progress on the SDNPA's priorities of 'Nature Recovery', 'Climate Action' and 'A National Park for All' in early 2024, to the SDNPA.

The representative of GATCOM, Councillor Liz Kitchen, had attended a transport forum and provided the following updates:

- Hydrogen buses serving Gatwick Airport had been proving successful
- The Grid E project had resulted in charging points being built, and that there was a plan to generate their own electricity
- Avis and ZipCar were planning a large hub at Gatwick, and to expand out to surrounding areas.

CO/54 **NOTICE OF MOTION**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Roger Noel, and seconded by Councillor Joy Dennis:

'The Care Leavers service in West Sussex supports young people to exit care successfully as they move towards independence and operates under a clear legislative framework provided by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The most recent Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on the 13th September 2023, included a paper on 'Leaving Care in West Sussex' which was in direct response to the recent comments in the full inspection by Ofsted back in March 2023 with respect to meeting the needs of care leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces corporate parenting principles which comprise seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to. The West Sussex Care Leavers service and increasingly our partners, operate in line with these principles which centre around the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people; to encourage those children and young people to express their views and to take those views into account; to help children and young people gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners; to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people; for those children and young people to be safe and have stability in their homelives, relationships and in education or work, and ultimately to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Whilst it is accepted that corporate parenting is not the statutory responsibility of the District Council, as District Councillors we should acknowledge that we are all corporate parents, particularly given that the West Sussex House Project Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed by all seven of the District and Boroughs Council partners, endorsing this view. But as Horsham District Councillors, we could be the first to go further and support the further aspirations of the West Sussex Care Leaver service through initiatives such as;

- Providing a shopfront facing community base for our Care Leavers – providing a communal space to meet, laundry facility, life skills, WiFi and a place to meet Leaving Care Personal Advisors*
- Linking to the above objective, a space for the County Council's Youth Emotional Support Service for meeting with children from across the county.*
- To offer free access to local gym/leisure centre/swimming pool to support young people's health and wellbeing.*
- An apprenticeship or work based opportunity provided by the District for any Care Leaver who wanted to explore this as an alternative Employment Education and Training option.*

This Council therefore calls upon the Leader and Cabinet to instruct officers to explore these initiatives, by engaging directly with the West Sussex Care Leavers Service, to proactively help the service move towards Good and onto Outstanding status through the implementation of these initiatives for the benefit of our young people leaving care.'

Councillor Roger Noel spoke in support of the motion, and highlighted the importance of supporting care leavers. He stated that there was a common duty to use available resources to maintain stability and continuity in the home lives of vulnerable young people.

Members spoke in support of the motion and highlighted that support could extend to other young people across the District, and that service leavers were also vulnerable members of the community that may benefit from support. It was suggested that progress could be achieved through the voluntary sector and that access to mental health support was a crucial element. A request was made for further information from West Sussex County Council in relation to their service arrangements, as well as financial implications of support that could be provided by this Council.

Cabinet Members spoke in support of the motion, and suggested that a considered response, following discussions with officers, be brought before Members at a later date.

Following a vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Philip Circus, and seconded by Councillor Liz Kitchen:

‘This Council, whilst acknowledging the very significant contribution made to the local economy and the Gatwick Diamond Area, expresses its opposition to further expansion of Gatwick airport. Such expansion, the Council believes, would be damaging to the interests of residents in respect of noise and pollution and the Council does not believe the existing infrastructure, particularly in terms of road and rail, is adequate for the needs of the airport. There is, in our view, no realistic possibility that further expansion could be matched by the necessary investment that would be needed in terms of further infrastructure.

With a newly elected Council, we have resolved to confirm our long-standing position on this important issue.’

Councillor Circus spoke in support of the motion and highlighted the importance of the airport in relation to prosperity, however considered that further expansion may cause there to be a trade-off, against the public interest, with consideration to the climate emergency and concerns around infrastructure.

Councillor Blackburn proposed the following amendment, to reflect the Council’s commitment to climate action and nature recovery:

That “Such expansion, the Council believes, would be damaging to the interests of residents in respect of noise and pollution and the Council does not believe the existing infrastructure, particularly in terms of road and rail, is adequate for the needs of the airport.” be AMENDED to “Such expansion, the Council believes, would be damaging to the environment, including impacts on noise, pollution and biodiversity, as well as to our climate and carbon reduction aims and the Council does not believe the existing infrastructure, particularly in terms of road and rail, is adequate for the needs of the airport.”

Councillor Mike Croker seconded the amendment and spoke in support.

Following a vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

CO/55 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

- (a) Councillor Philip Circus asked Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste the following question:

“When I was the portfolio holder for waste issues at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, we introduced a scheme whereby councillors, staff and the public could book in vehicles for MOT tests when there was spare capacity at the depot. Will the Cabinet member give consideration to a similar scheme at Horsham as it would not only be a benefit to those making use of the scheme but a potential additional source of revenue?”

The Cabinet Member replied:

“Horsham District Council has, in the past, considered the possibility of providing an MOT service and had discounted it on the basis that it would be cost prohibitive. We would need to invest around £50,000 in new equipment, employ a qualified MOT inspector and also additional administrative resource to co-ordinate the service. It has never been considered that this would deliver a satisfactory financial return. Space is also quite tight in the Depot, and as such a service would probably take out one of our bays for a significant period each year, it would impact on our ability to maintain the existing Council fleet.

That said, we are always keen to look at opportunities to maximise the use of our assets and generate income we are currently working on a plan to require all Horsham District Council licensed taxis to have their six monthly vehicle safety checks undertaken by our mechanics at the Depot. This will deliver a financial return, and if we consider that there could be opportunities to further expand this service, we will certainly investigate the costs and potential income.”

Councillor Circus asked the following supplementary question:

“Would the Cabinet Member be willing, as part of this issue, to talk to other local authorities, including Reigate and Banstead if they are still operating this scheme to see what their experience is? Will he confirm that long run is not another way of saying the issues are being kicked into the long grass?”

The Cabinet Member replied:

“Of course, always happy to look at experience elsewhere and good practice elsewhere and learn from it. Reigate and Banstead are relatively near and I’m happy to go and talk that through with them. I am not seeking to kick it into the log grass, I’m simply seeking to say that it depends on the circumstances and the financial benefits and therefore I can not say now yes we will or no we will not.”

Councillor Circus thanked the Cabinet Member for their responses.

- (b) Councillor Claudia Fisher asked Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure the following question:

“Will the current administration reassure us that the quality of the build in the new Local Plan will be consistent with the Climate Action Strategy for HDC?”

The Cabinet Member replied:

“I can confirm that the preparation of the Local Plan is indeed taking into account the Council’s Climate Action Strategy.

In preparing the Local Plan, officers in strategic planning have worked very closely the Environmental Coordination Manager. This has included joint work on the Council's climate change evidence base, and close collaboration during policy development to ensure that local plan policies reflect our wider corporate objectives on climate change. The Local Plan policies remain a work in progress, although of course will come before you all very soon. However, I can say in advance, it is envisaged they will include net zero related requirements in terms of both energy use and design and construction methods. They will also seek to ensure that any development that comes forward is able to adapt to and cope with the climate changes we are already observing. In addition, other policies such as those regarding biodiversity will help deliver opportunities for carbon sequestration as well as addressing the ecological emergency that we are all facing.

It is important to say that the Local Plan policies represent a significant step forward in ensuring that new development is built to the highest possible environmental standards, but at the same time we are having to work in the context of continually moving targets and deadlines from the Government. It is very difficult to know when important legislation will be enacted, or if it will be enacted, such as the Future Home Standard for eco-building, which in theory, should apply from 2025. This continues to cause redrafting, even at this late stage. Beyond the Local Plan and looking to the future, there will be more work that the strategic planning and other Council officers will need to undertake to ensure that climate change measures are integrated into new developments. In particular, it is our intention to follow the approach set by Cornwall County Council in requiring developments to go above and beyond the Government's Future Home Standard, and if we succeed in this, it will be one of the best, and most exemplary schemes in the country. As this requires us to prepare a significant evidence base, via a process that could take 12-18 months, we will look to bring it in after this Local Plan is approved in the form of a future planning policy document, together with a supplementary planning document. This assumes of course that that Government does not change the rules of Supplementary Planning Documents, as it threatens to do so, or indeed other vital policy matters."

Councillor Fisher thanked that Cabinet Member for his reply, and asked the following supplementary question:

"I was pleased to see there are some aspects of build quality mentioned in the Council Plan and had a commitment to setting high environmental standards including net zero buildings, green gaps and addressing water neutrality. I would like to put a request in to the administration, that is open to listening, growing and learning, that net zero living could be added to that list and that in advance of the Local Plan building specifications being set as you described, if all Members could have a briefing on the building specification plan. I'm sure many of us would like to know the details, for example when solar PV panels, heat pumps and sufficient insulation will be standard requirements."

The Cabinet Member replied:

“I am not sure that net zero living would be entirely a Local Plan matter, but we can talk about separately. I want to try and get a draft of this part of the Local Plan to Members in advance of the meeting on 11 December. It is not ready yet, but I do hope to circulate it as soon as it practicably possible so that you have a chance to input but there should be a certain amount we could tell you straight away.”

Councillor Fisher thanked the Cabinet Member for their response, and stated that it was reassuring that the administration was resolute in its commitment to tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, with these actions.

CO/56 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.29 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN