

Council

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr Lyn Milner
The Deputy Mayor, Peter Scollard

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
Helen Ashenden
John Burden
John Caller
Lee Croxton
Sarah Gow
Gary Harding
Samir Jassal
Jordan Meade
Shane Mochrie-Cox
Diane Morton
Leslie Pearton
Tony Rice
Gurbax Singh
Narinderjit Singh Thandi
Denise Tiran
Jenny Wallace
Frank Wardle

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill	Assistant Director Legal and Governance
Simon Walsh	Service Manager (Communities)
Chris Wakeford	Committee Services Manager

38. Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

39. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5 October 2021 were signed by the Mayor.

40. Declarations of Interest

Cllr John Burden declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Homes England Consortium Agreement) in that he is a Trustee of Elizabeth Huggins Cottages Charity but advised he would not need to leave the room when this item was considered.

Cllr Sarah Gow declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (Homes England Consortium Agreement) in that she is an appointed Director of Rosherville Limited, the Council's Local Authority Trading Company. Due to the nature of the interest and the references to Rosherville in the report, Cllr Gow did not need to leave the room during the debate of the report

Cllr Tony Rice declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (Homes England Consortium Agreement) in that he is an appointed Director of Rosherville Limited, the Council's Local Authority Trading Company. Due to the nature of the interest and the references to Rosherville in the report, Cllr Rice did not need to leave the room during the debate of the report.

41. To answer any questions received from members of the public of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 13

The following question had been submitted by John Milner (Extinction Rebellion Gravesham) and a response was given by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

Question:

In the Council's Climate Change report dated December 2020 under areas of focus for 2021 (p.11 onwards) – key deliverables in 2021 and specifically in relation to bullet point 13 "Progress activity to improve the energy efficiency of council owned homes" – so could the Council please tell us:

What action has been taken to improve the efficiency of homes other than fitting more efficient fossil fuel gas boilers?

Also;

How many and what percentage of council homes this has benefitted?

Thank you

Extinction Rebellion Gravesham
(Residents of Gravesham)

Response:

Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council, highlighted the following points in his response:-

Gravesham has 5,700 units in its Council Housing stock and a budget of £90million would be required to bring these homes up to full compliance of carbon neutrality and these costs would currently have to be met by the tenants. The Council is doing its best to meet the target of 2025 but financial assistance is needed in this area.

Despite a lack of Government direction and commitment to help fund climate change in residential buildings, the Council has progressed action within its housing stock to reduce carbon emissions. The Council has completed or is scheduled to complete the following actions to improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock in 2021/22.

- The replacement of inefficient double glazing with 'A' rated double glazing to 160 homes.

- The installation of flue gas heat recovery systems (FGHR) to 95 homes with 'A' rated gas boilers.
- Installing adequate loft insulation to 99 homes
- Installing cavity wall insulation to 22 homes
- Installing renewable heating, ground and air source heat pumps (GSHP & ASHP) to 17 homes.

Without accounting for the reduction in carbon emissions that the installation of 265 'A' rated gas boilers achieve, the above measures will reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 1,814,704kg CO₂ and these improvements benefit 393 homes, which is 7% of our housing stock for 2021/22.

It is really challenging to have a significant impact on carbon emissions within existing residential buildings but despite this, the Council continues to do all it can to ensure that emissions within our existing stock reduce and that we achieve the net-zero carbon targets set by Government.

One such target is to ensure that all newly rented private sector properties meet an EPC rating of C by 2025 with a further target being set for existing private sector tenancies by 2028. In addition to this, they have also set a target for social rented properties to meet EPC C standards by 2030. At Gravesham, and as a Landlord, we want to lead by example and therefore, we are currently finalising plans and budgets to meet the requirement set for the private sector within our social housing stock to meet EPC C standards by 2025.

As a Council we have recognised that whilst there are some significant challenges in decarbonising our existing housing stock, there are also opportunities to go above and beyond what is expected when developing new council homes.

Since 2019, we have built 49 new homes, with a further 84 currently on-site which have been designed to meet an EPC rating of B to ensure thermal comfort for our tenants, whilst also helping to reduce fuel bills and carbon emissions. In addition to this, a further 50 homes are currently being designed to PassivHaus standards, which again, is another example of this Council going above and beyond to deliver, and realise its climate change commitments.

42. Minutes of Committees

Motions that proceedings, reports and recommendations of Committees, except those reserved under Council Procedure 5.2(6) as referred to below be received and adopted and where applicable the Orders made by them be ratified and confirmed were duly proposed, seconded and resolved in each case.

- Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 21 September 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 29 September 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 4 October 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 14 October 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 27 October 2021

- Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday, 2 November 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 8 November 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Wednesday, 10 November 2021
- Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 24 November 2021

43. Reserved Minutes

There were no reserved minutes.

44. Climate Change Annual Report 2021

Council were presented with the draft Climate Change Annual Report for consideration.

The report set out the following:

- **Borough and Council Emissions Baseline**
Providing an update on the borough-wide emissions using data provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and incorporating updated details of the emissions from council operations using the LGA Accounting Tool for Greenhouse Gas Emissions provided by Local Partnerships.
- **Carbon Reduction Actions during 2021**
An overview of the proactive work that has been undertaken by the council over the past 12 months, since December 2020, in response to the three strategic priorities identified:
 - Cleaner Environment
 - Strategic Environment
 - Progressive Council
- **Future Carbon Pressure**
Identification of the future projects and/or initiatives that will create added pressure for the borough in tackling climate change and specifically, the levels of carbon emissions.
- **Areas of Focus for 2022**
Identification of the key areas that will be considered in 2022, including identification of key deliverables for this period, taken from the council's proposed Climate Change Strategy.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Lee Croxton that:-

The progress of the council during 2021 in developing its activity to deliver the Climate Change motion be noted.

The Annual Report, set out at appendix two, be approved and delegated authority be granted for any final amendments to be made by the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive

Following a debate, the motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously

45. Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030

Council were presented with the draft Climate Change Strategy for the period 2022-2030 for approval.

The research undertaken has enabled the council to set out a high-level, strategic Delivery Plan within the Strategy under three key workstreams:

- **Gravesham Borough Council – the organisation**
Focusing on how the council can change its own operations, and those of its employees, wherever possible to reduce the level of carbon emissions its produces.
- **Gravesham Borough Council – the housing provider**
Exploring opportunities to bring the council's current housing stock up to a better level of energy efficiency standard where it is possible to do so; ensuring new council housing is built to a high level of sustainability and ensuring local planning policy reflects the need for the borough to consider energy efficiency in all developments moving forward.
- **Gravesham Borough Council – the community leader**
It is clear that the council cannot directly affect all of the changes that are needed across the borough. However, in its role as a community leader, it can work with residents, community groups and partners to educate and support them in making changes which will have a positive impact on the level of carbon emissions in the borough.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Lee Croxton that:-

The draft Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, set out at appendix two, be approved and delegated authority be granted for any final amendments to be made by the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive.

The Climate Change Cross Party Working Group be disbanded, recognising that the actions of this group will be taken forward by the newly-constituted Climate Change Advisory Board.

Following a debate, the motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously

46. Homes England Consortium Agreement

Council were presented with a report which sought approval for delegated authority from Full Council, intended to enable the council to respond quickly to opportunities for maximising the benefit that can be derived for the Borough from the council's designation as an Investment Partner with Homes England.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Lee Croxton that:-

Delegated authority be given to the Director (Housing), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive, the Director (Corporate Services) (in the role of Section 151 Officer) and the Monitoring Officer to take all necessary practical, financial and legal actions (including entering into the relevant formal legal agreements) required to enter into consortium agreements with organisations for the sole purpose of accessing grant funding from the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026, to bring forward housing development in the Borough of Gravesham.

Delegated authority be given to Director (Corporate Services) to adjust the Council's future Capital Programmes in-year to reflect any Homes England grant funding awarded under the Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously

47. Appointment of External Auditors - National Scheme for Auditor Appointments from April 2023

Council were presented with a report which informed Members of the options available for the appointment of local auditors appointments and notified Members of the invitation to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments from April 2023.

The report recommended opting into the national scheme for auditor appointments.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Lee Croxton that:-

Council accepts the invitation to opt in to the appointing person arrangements made by the PSAA for the appointment of external auditors as recommended by the Finance and Audit Committee on 10th November 2021.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

48. Review of Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005

Council were presented with a report which apprised Members of the steps taken in reviewing the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Lee Croxton that:-

Council approve the revised Gravesham Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005, with the continued inclusion of a no-casinos resolution.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

49. To consider questions from Members of the Council of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 14.

No questions had been received.

50. To receive the Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor highlighted the following event to Members:

- 13 February 2022 - Mayor's Charity Sunday Lunch at Cobham Hall.

The Mayor thanked Councillors and residents who have supported the Mayor's Charities (Ellenor Hospice and Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services) and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm