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* You may also report issues to your local ward Councillor (contact details are on the NHDC website
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**Present**

* (GG) Cllr Gary Grindal (chair)
* (HO) Cllr Helen Oliver
* (DA) Cllr Daniel Allen
* (SP) Cllr Sean Prendergast
* (KA) Cllr Katie Aspinwall
* (IM) Cllr Ian Mantle (Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Transport)
* (MD) Cllr Morgan Derbyshire
* (SJ) Cllr Steve Jarvis (Executive Member for Environment and Leisure)
* (SB) Cllr Simon Bloxham (also representing Herts County Council)
* Claire Morgan (notes) – Community Engagement Team Leader
* Katie Staddon – Assistant Community Engagement Officer
* Lea Ellis – Assistant Community Engagement Officer
* (MOP) Members of Public

The Chair, Cllr Gary Grindal, welcomed everybody to the Town Talk and asked the Councillor’s present to introduce themselves to the audience. Cllr Grindall explained that this Town Talk would be based on the Climate Emergency recently declared by NHDC. He introduced Cllr Steve Jarvis in his role as co-chair of the newly formed Environment Panel which has been set up by NHDC to engage with the wider community and interested groups. Cllr Grindal then handed over to Cllr Jarvis to explain the role of the panel and to provide updates on their most recent meeting which was the previous evening.

**Update from Councillor Steve Jarvis**

Cllr SJ explained that NHDC have taken many steps towards tackling climate issues. As part of declaring a Climate Emergency, NHDC have set a goal to become Net Zero Carbon by 2030. Cllr Jarvis explained that there are three steps to lowering emissions, these are:

1. Looking at the emissions which the Council produces itself i.e. in Council buildings, Leisure Centres, Community Centres etc.
2. Ensuring that the council’s policies enable residents and businesses to reduce their climate impact across the district.
3. Persuading residents to become more eco-friendly both in their home lives and within the local community.

Cllr Steve Jarvis spoke about the recently established Environmental Panel which is a cross-party group of councillors who meet with members of the public and environmental groups to gain ideas on best practise with regard to Environmental Issues.

The Environmental Panel has had two meetings so far. The first took place on Wednesday 11th September 2019 and its purpose was to ask the public what the Councils’ main objectives should be to address the climate emergency. There were discussions about a number of topics including food waste, planning and recycling.

The second meeting took place on Tuesday 15th October 2019 and its purpose was to discuss the Local Plan and the proposed expansion of Luton Airport.

Going forward, there are three further Environmental Panel Meetings planned for the remainder of the civic year, these are:

Thursday, 28 November 2019 Bio-Diversity (including Trees and landscaping)

Thursday, 9 January 2020 Waste, Recycling and Food Waste

Thursday, 5 March 2020 Transport, travel and Air Quality

**Town Talk Theme**

Councillor GG explained that the aim of the evening was to get some ideas from the public on what actions they would like the Council to take related to the Climate Emergency in Letchworth and beyond. He handed over to Cllr HO who explained the format for the session.

Cllr HO allocated the public 10 minutes to write down their questions/ideas on post-it notes and put these on the flip chart at the front of the room. There were two suggested headings which were:

1. Questions about what action the Council are taking to address the Climate Emergency.
2. Suggestions on what the Council could be doing better/more of.

**Questions**

* How can the Council spread the message to local residents to encourage them to make a positive difference environmentally?

Cllr GG responded that it is all about public engagement.

Cllr DA added that the most important thing is communication. He explained that Councillors should be making themselves available to have these types of discussions with residents for example at Town Talks and Councillors’ Surgeries.

* How does the Council plan to engage schools and youth groups in the importance of responding to the Climate Emergency?

Cllr GG explained that as part of Democracy Week, the Council hosted young people from six different schools across the District on Monday 14th October 2019. This was a chance for the pupils to learn more about the democratic process, registering to vote and how the electoral process works. For more information visit:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/nhdc-connects-future-voters-part-local-democracy-week>

* MOP – Simon Franklin asked; could the Council make lesson plans for local schools regarding climate change issues?

Cllr SJ explained that the Council are already working to engage primary schools in order to increase the cross-section of people the Council are reaching. The hope of educating children on such an important matter is that they will go home and apply pressure on their parents to make environmentally friendly choices.

* Totness held a day to generate ideas about Climate Actions with a broad cross-section of local people including schools, councillors etc. Could we have more sessions like this with elderly, schools etc.?
* Councillors responded that this was definitely something they would look into.

**Suggestions**

Suggestions were grouped into three categories:

1. Biodiversity
2. Business Engagement
3. Recycling

Biodiversity

* Cllr HO explained that she has personally reached out to schools with suggested ideas that they could implement to encourage Biodiversity and informed them that there are grants available for these types of projects. Unfortunately HO has not has many responses.

Business Engagement

* It was suggested that the Heritage Foundation’s strategy should involve ethical and environmentally friendly businesses.

Recycling

* MOP – Hilary Kemp mentioned that it would be great for Letchworth to have a ‘Repair Café’ where local residents could take pre loved items which need repairs. This would be run by volunteers who are specialists in certain things for example watches/jewellery. Hilary noted that Royston already has a Repair Café which is run by a number of experts and this good be an example of best practise. This would in particular combat the issue of the large amounts of white goods which end up in landfill.

***Further questions and suggestions which were written on post-it notes have been collated and typed up into one document. This will be sent out alongside these minutes.***

**General Discussion**

* MOP - Diane Ketcher mentioned that Rob Hopkins, founder of the International Transition Town Movement will Discuss and Sign his Book ‘From What Is to What If’ on Wednesday 23rd October 7.30pm at Fortescue Hall, SG6 3TP. Tickets are £6, which are deductible from the cost of the hardback book (£19.99) if purchased on the evening. Tickets can be purchased from David’s bookshop and online here: <https://www.davids-bookshops.co.uk/events/2019/10/rob-hopkins-will-discuss-and-sign-his-book-from-what-is-to-what-if.aspx>
* MOP noted that there is no shortage of materials related to the Climate Emergency but that it is up to the Waste and Recycling Team at NHDC to customise materials which can then be cascaded.

**Action: Community Engagement Team will pass this on to the relevant teams at NHDC.**

* Cllr SJ spoke about how NHDC are working alongside local environmental groups because sometimes messages are received better from residents than from the Council.
* Cllr DA spoke about the Plastic Recycling Machine which was a positive initiative introduced by Letchworth BID and the Heritage Foundation.
* MOP stated that it’s all well and good that independent stores have signed up to the Surfers Against Sewage ‘Plastic Free’ campaign however, we should be involving chain companies and larger scale corporations.
* Cllr GG noted that the Council have been working very closely with the Heritage Foundation to ensure that they share the councils vision on becoming more Eco-friendly.
* MOP noted that often the Heritage Foundation cause barriers to residents who want to make their houses greener (for example by installing solar panels) due to their strict building regulations.
* Cllr IM responded that the Council are currently in the process of producing planning guidance on housing and factory requirements.
* Cllr GG mentioned that Howard Cottage Housing Association manage an ‘Eco Home’ on Common View in Letchworth which has been transformed into a blueprint for energy efficient solid wall properties. For more information please visit the Garden City Collection website: <http://www.gardencitycollection.com/themes/common-view> or contact them on: 01462 476075.
* MOP asked if the supplementary planning guidance which Cllr IM mentioned could be implemented before the Local Plan.
* Cllr IM responded that this guidance is absolutely intended to inform the Town Plan.

The meeting was closed at 7.25pm by Councillor Gary Grindall who thanked everyone for attending and added that residents could share any additional comments with their local councillors who will be at Letchworth Councillors’ Surgery on Saturday 19th October from 10.30am until 12pm in Garden Square Shopping Centre (outside Costa).

Officer Claire Morgan also mentioned that members of the public were more than welcome to observe the Letchworth Area Committee meeting which was starting at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber.

**Next Letchworth Town Talk and Area Committee:**

**Wednesday 11th December 6.30pm at NHDC.**