

COUNCIL – 28 MARCH 2024

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Executive Summary

The following question has been received from a Member of Public. The individual who raised the question has been invited to attend the meeting. A formal response has been provided by the Portfolio Holder.

Question – James Gordon

“Following clarification of central government’s financial support package, when can we expect WBC to reengage with the challenge presented by the climate emergency and plot a new course to net zero by 2050 as outlined by Climate Change Strategy 2050?”

Supporting Statement

“We write to you as a concerned residents of Woking and as members of Woking Environment Action (WEAct). We appreciate the difficult financial situation WBC is currently in, and the priority given to maintenance of statutory services, however, the challenge presented by climate change remains the most pressing issue of our time and WBC must play its part in meeting that challenge. Ultimately delaying climate action is a false economy that results in increased costs for reaching net-zero. We therefore urge the council to reengage with climate change and identify positive actions that would incur no or minimal costs. We have previously shared with WBC a list of actions that could advance its climate response at no or little cost. These include but are not limited to-

1. Including carbon mitigation and climate adaptation in the risk register and embed carbon and resilience impact assessments in all Council decisions,
2. Implementing a programme of climate literacy amongst council employees and Councillors. This can be provided on a ‘Train the Trainer’ basis so as not to incur undue costs.
3. Promoting awareness of climate change to residents and local businesses and the actions that they can take to help reduce carbon emissions.
4. Using the Council restructuring opportunity to improve departmental collaboration on the cross-cutting issue of climate change.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how these and other measures could be incorporated into revised net-zero planning.”

Reply from Councillor Peter Graves

“Thank you for your question and for raising this matter, which remains a key priority for the Council. It is disappointing that, due to the financial position of the Council, we have needed to review the draft Woking Net Zero strategy, and in particular the deliverability of several of the actions proposed. However, that does not mean we will not be taking this work forward. It is proposed to bring an updated strategy to the Executive meeting in June. Ahead of that we will be meeting with key partners, including WEAct and officers at Surrey County Council, to consider how we can more effectively work together towards 2050. We also need remember we did adopt

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the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document in the Autumn which is now being used with developers to secure the best possible outcomes when new developments come forward.”

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