

Item 9 - To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

1. Motion from Cllr Skinner (Sevenoaks Town and St. John's)

"This Council notes:

- The need for increased affordable housing that has been identified in the Housing Strategy: and
- The consistent failure of the Council to meet that need over a number of years, including repeated failure to utilise the Council's own land to meet this need.

The Council therefore resolves:

- To make an urgent step change in its commitment to the supply of affordable housing in order to sustain a vibrant and prosperous community in Sevenoaks District, particularly in light of cost of living crisis facing many local families: and
- To set a positive example to all developers, by using its own land for the development of affordable housing"

2. Motion from Cllr Manston (Ash and New Ash Green)

"This Council wholeheartedly supports the Local Government Association's "Debate not Hate" campaign and pledges to:

- Sign up to the Debate Not Hate campaign on the LGA website
- Write to the MPs for Sevenoaks District to ask them to support the campaign
- Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians
- Ensure that every Member of this Council receives a copy of the Debate Not Hate campaign report
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers
- Ensure the council has a clear reporting mechanism which councillors can use to monitor and record incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers
- Regularly review the support available to councillors and officers in relation to abuse, intimidation and personal safety
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for

the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals like MPs.

Background -

Debating and disagreeing with one another has always been, and will continue to be, a healthy part of democracy. However, the right engagement matters and abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory and has no place in politics.

Seven in 10 councillors in England reported experiencing abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months and councillors reported feeling that abuse, both in person and on-line, is becoming more common and increasing in severity.

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election and undermines public trust in the democratic process.

The increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure that councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

The motion will commit this council to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does. It is non-political and will be equally beneficial to all Members of this council.

Sevenoaks District Council has long supported good standards and has a strong code of conduct and is already very much aligned with the LGAs national campaign, "Debate not Hate". Working cross-party, our Council will be encouraging respect and good debate on issues that matter to our residents both in and outside the Council.

See: [Debate Not Hate | Local Government Association](#)

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>"

3. Motion from Cllr Robinson (Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge)

"This Council believes its proceedings should be transparent and that Councillors should be accountable to the residents whom they represent.

This Council therefore resolves that as soon as possible:

- All public meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees will be recorded on video, this record will be made immediately available, and will be saved on a publicly available website.
- A system of electronic voting will be installed to make it straightforward and efficient to record the votes of individual Councillors.”

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4. Motion from Cllr Streatfeild (Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone)

“This Council notes that:

- Small Business Saturday 2023 is coming up on 25 November. Small Business Saturday has grown into a significant event – with £1.1 billion spent at small businesses during the 2020 event alone.
- This is an excellent opportunity to promote small businesses across Sevenoaks District and to celebrate the contribution smaller businesses make.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To ask the Chief Executive and Heads of Service to ensure that the Council participates fully in Small Business Saturday on 25 November 2023.
- To request that officers work closely with local business organisations and smaller enterprises across the District to make them aware of the day and encourage them to sign up.
- To ensure that Small Business Saturday is promoted thoroughly and prominently on the Council’s website, social media channels and other external communications.
- To make parking free in all District Council car parks on 25 November 2023 and on the following three Saturdays in the lead up to Christmas.”

5. Motion from Cllr Lindop (Ash & New Ash Green)

“This council recognises the scale and magnitude of the climate and nature emergency and pledges to:

- Publicly declare a Climate and Nature Emergency
- Reduce emissions from the Council's estate to net zero by 2030
- Do all we can to reduce carbon emissions from Sevenoaks District to net zero by 2050
- Take these steps to achieve net zero for the council and district:
 - a) Develop a Climate Change Strategy
 - b) Establish a Climate Change Panel
 - c) Convene a Climate Change Community Forum
 - d) Report on progress via FIAC and Cabinet
 - e) Provide a detailed Climate Change Assessment on all new undertakings
 - f) Ensure that annual budgeting allows for the above Net Zero goals
 - g) Write to Government to call for the powers, resources and funding to achieve Net Zero

Climate Change Strategy - we will develop a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy within 12 months that addresses all inward and outward-facing Council functions, ensures that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning are in line with net zero commitments, ensures that appropriate resources and capacity are in place to address the climate emergency effectively, supports and works with relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate a net zero and climate resilient district by 2050 and incorporates LGA guidance on what to do once a council has declared a climate emergency.

Climate Change Panel - council to establish this panel to champion the Net Zero Strategy and invite appropriate experts to support our climate change actions.

Climate Change Community Forum - for representation and participation from across the district including, but not be limited to, representatives from local communities, children and young people, parish and town councils, organisations, business, education, nature groups, agricultural, food, health and transport groups.

Reporting - to take place annually via the council's advisory process in order to show our progress towards net zero, the impact on the council and the level of our investment in the fossil fuel industry.

Assessments - all new undertakings will include a detailed assessment of the impact on Climate Change and our net zero commitments.

Budgeting - annual budgeting to prioritise action on the climate and nature emergency.

UK Government - the Portfolio Holder will write to central Government to set out the Council's intentions and call for provision of the powers, resources and funding required to achieve them.

Additional notes

We are facing an unprecedented, anthropogenic climate and nature emergency and need to take collective responsibility for preserving the planet for future generations. The Climate and Nature Emergency is the most serious and urgent challenge facing communities across the World as well as Sevenoaks District. Whilst facing this emergency will be difficult, it is essential to protect the planet for future generations and to avoid the worst effects of climate change. We need a significant step change from local, national and international leaders to limit the most threatening effects of climate change such as disruption to the food chain and mass displacement.

“The pace and scale of climate action are insufficient to tackle climate change. Accelerated action is required.” - IPCC** 2023

In October 2018 a ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C’ was published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which described the enormous harm that a 2°C average rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared with a 1.5°C rise and confirmed that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and local authorities, society and the private sector.

“The position of councils as place-shapers, convenors of communities and local partners, asset-owners, problem solvers and significant purchasers puts them at the forefront of delivering real, tangible changes in the transition to net zero.” - LGA***

The need for a new plan

Under the current Net Zero Plan, Sevenoaks Council is unlikely to reach net zero by 2030. The people of Sevenoaks want us to act decisively on climate change and we owe it to them to protect their future with a much more comprehensive plan and bolder commitment for which they can hold us to account.

Furthermore, we need to take some responsibility for the county reaching net zero by 2050. Shifting the onus to other councils or residents and businesses will only result in missing all of our goals. Once we all accept responsibility, we can work together and achieve so much more.

The most efficient and effective way for us to achieve net zero is to make use of the existing framework that other councils have adopted which starts with a public acknowledgement of the dire situation we face and a commitment to prioritising it.

Some of the work in this motion has already been started but this motion consolidates it, demonstrates leadership to business and individuals across the District and forms the basis of a new direction where we formally establish the climate and nature emergency as our most pressing concern and shift our workload towards addressing it in every way we can.

Public declaration

In order to galvanise the collaborative efforts needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change, the following bodies have declared a climate and nature emergency which speaks to the power and leverage of a collective movement.

- 18 National Governments and the EU ****
- The UK Government
- Kent County Council
- Canterbury, Dover, Dartford, Folkestone and Hythe, Gravesham, Medway, Thanet, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Swale Councils
- 325 out of 393 UK councils *****

Sevenoaks and Ashford are the only councils in Kent that have not yet declared a climate and nature emergency. Given that so much of Sevenoaks district is a natural carbon sink and the council's own emissions contribute such a small amount to climate change, it would seem a simple and proactive step for the council to join forces with the rest of the county and support the collective effort.

Cleaner and Greener Committee

This matter has been discussed at the Cleaner and Greener Committee and with the Leader of the Council.

On 13th June 2023, the following question was asked at the Cleaner and Greener Committee: "The fact that Sevenoaks Council has a Net Zero policy speaks to the dedication of all members and officers to limiting the harmful effects of climate change. But does the Cleaner and Greener Committee feel that our Net Zero policy goes far enough towards addressing the climate and nature crisis or should we be considering an official declaration of a climate emergency, like 325 of the 393 other councils in the UK (many of which are Conservative-led)? For example, given the possibility that we may in fact miss our Net Zero targets, in part due to financial constraints, would collaborating for collective success strengthen our work and open a wider range of opportunities?"

On 10th October 2023, the Cleaner and Greener Committee received an update on the Council's Net Zero target. The committee was told that the Council is only responsible for 0.36% of the district's emissions and is working to reduce those. A question was asked as to whose responsibility it was to deliver Kent County Council's and the UK Government's target of Net Zero by 2050. The committee was told that Sevenoaks Council has little influence over this. However, both Kent County Council and the UK Government could both say the same.

The time has come for us to take control of our destiny, take responsibility for our district and demonstrate leadership and innovation as we strive to hit net zero and limit the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

"The UK's first 40°C day, in summer 2022, was the clearest indication that climate change has arrived in this country. Last year's record breaking temperatures brought unprecedented heat-related deaths, wildfire incidents and significant infrastructure disruption. The impacts of climate change will intensify over coming decades, leaving the UK vulnerable without better resilience planning and preparation." - CCC***** March 2023

*<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/ARUP-Climate-Emergency-What-Next.pdf>

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

***Local Government Association

****<https://cape.mysociety.org/councils/>

*****<https://climateemergencydeclaration.org>

*****Climate Change Committee"