

TO: All members of Council

Our reference CS
Your reference N/A
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Dear Councillor

Council - Tuesday 22 June 2021

Attached are the written responses to the questions/statements raised at the above meeting, as referred to in the minutes.

Yours sincerely

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West Suffolk
Council

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Council: 22 June 2021 - written responses to questions/statements

Item 5: Leader's Statement: Question from Councillor Sarah Pugh to Councillor John Griffiths:

In the context of installing EV charging points in towns and larger areas of the district, how are very rural, smaller communities going to achieve a change to no petrol or diesel vehicles?

Response from Councillor Griffiths:

West Suffolk Council are working with commercial and public sector partners to deliver a resilient charging network in the district. We are at the early stages of developing this network and continually improving our provision and learning the best ways of delivery. This is an ongoing challenge with a number of hurdles that need to be overcome such as funding, electrical grid constraints and evolving technology. There are also many commercial providers operating in the UK marketplace and West Suffolk needs to carefully balance provision with private third party provision.

Although we recognise that public charge points will be required throughout the district, it should be noted that many residents with off street parking such as a driveway or garage will be able to install charge points at home for which there is national funding through the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). Home charging will be the cheapest and easiest method of charging for these residents and they are unlikely to require regular use of the public charging network as part of their day to day driving. Residents in rural areas will be more likely to have private driveway's or garage's than those in our town centres.

So far West Suffolk Council have concentrated on our public car parks and busy town locations which allows us to both maximise the grants available and ensure greater use of the installed charge points. These locations will probably service the greatest number of residents and a higher proportion of these residents will not have the ability to charge at home. These charge points also serve leisure and shopping visitors as well as those who are commuting from rural destinations to work in our towns. However, we also work closely with Suffolk County Council who are providing charge points in rural community locations through their Plug-in Suffolk scheme. The Plug-in Suffolk scheme will build the network in more rural locations.

We have also been ensuring through the planning process that new residential and commercial developments, both in towns and rural areas, are equipped with

EV charging points and we have provided grants through our Greener Business Grant scheme to help fund charge points for a number of businesses throughout the district. Businesses can also receive funding from OZEV. Charging at work is the second most frequent charging location used by EV drivers and a popular option for those without any home charging facilities.

Moving forward, we will continue to support the Plug-in Suffolk scheme to support the provision of charge points in rural community locations such as village halls and community centres; signpost residents and businesses to OZEV funding as well as provide our own funding for local businesses; and work with colleagues in planning to ensure new developments are suitably equipped with EV charge points. We will also continue to look at other opportunities in both our towns and villages, including working with commercial partners on developing rapid charging hubs.

We are still at the early stages of this transition, however, with a combination of home charging, workplace charging, charging opportunities at rural community centres and rapid charging hubs residents in our more rural communities will be able to transition to zero emission electric vehicles. We consider that this transition is achievable for the majority of residents in our rural communities now and will become achievable to many more over the next five to ten years.

For more information please see the following pages-

Plug in Suffolk- [Plug In Suffolk - Electric Vehicle Charging Network](#)

WS Greener Business Grant – [Greener Business Grant Leaflet- \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

OZEV grants – [Grant schemes for electric vehicle charging infrastructure - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

WSC EV page – [Charging points and electric vehicles UK 2021 - Zap Map \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

Zap Map - [Charging points and electric vehicles UK 2021 - Zap Map \(zap-map.com\)](#)

Item 5: Leader’s Statement: Question from Councillor Julia Wakelam to Councillor John Griffiths:

Councillor Wakelam asked how the electrification of the Council fleet was going, including how many electric cars and other vehicles it has now, or plan to buy in the near future?

Response from Councillor John Griffiths:

The Council currently has one electric van that has travelled 3,339km since it was purchased last year producing zero point of use emissions. Feedback from those driving the electric van has been positive and the Council is looking to switch other fleet vehicles to zero emission alternatives as part of its fleet renewal programme. It is anticipated that the next vehicles to be swapped to

electric alternatives will be supervisor vans and our fleet management team will be trialling further electric vehicles as COVID-19 restrictions end. Where possible the operations team are investing in electric and rechargeable tools rather than fossil fuel driven ones.

It is worth noting that total owned vehicle emissions have decreased by 17 percent compared to 2010-2021 baseline. Total fuel use has decreased by 11 percent compared to 2019-2020.

The Council's Annual Environment Statement and update on progress on our Environment and Climate Change Actions Plan will be considered by Cabinet on 20 July 2021.

Item 8: Western Way Development Final Business Case Update and Review: Question from Councillor Max Clarke to Councillor Jo Rayner, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs:

In the context of approaching the fourth anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, Councillor Clarke asked what guarantees could be given to residents that the same flammable materials were not used in the cladding applied to social housing across West Suffolk, with direct reference given to locations of social housing in Cllr Clarke's ward.

Response from Councillor Jo Rayner – deferred to Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Councillor Andy Drummond, Portfolio Holder for Regulatory:

The Building Regulations have been amended so that certain buildings, such as residential buildings, over 18 metres have to be fitted with non-combustible cladding. As far as we have been able to ascertain, we do not have any residential buildings in our area that are over 18 metres and clad with combustible cladding.

As to the question whether we have any social housing with combustible cladding, this would be a question for the Housing Associations who are responsible for the maintenance of their properties and compliance with the legal requirements to protect their tenants. We think the Housing Associations have inspected their stock as we have seen upgrades in relation to fire safety following a survey and the Government required confirmation, following Grenfell, that their properties were safe.

Building regulations do not require non-combustible cladding to low rise domestic buildings, unless they are close to a boundary, which we assume is due to the lower risk to occupants than in tower blocks and this will remain for the Government to legislate accordingly. Building regulations are not retrospective and so it is not possible to enforce these on existing housing, however serious hazards in the rented sector are assessed for risk and enforced under the

Housing Act. If the Council is aware of this cladding on any property we would investigate under our statutory provisions and, in practice, if this were to be on social housing we would liaise with the relevant Landlord as with other disrepair issues.

Item 12: Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022: Questions from Councillor David Smith to Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance:

Councillor David Smith asked the following specific questions:

- How many zero hours contracts does the Council provide?
- From which service/s and how many staff were furloughed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and have they all now returned to work on full pay?
- The comparison data table in Appendix A did not include detail for West Suffolk Council, however, the missing detail was given in paragraph 11.3. Cllr Smith commented that this could be a 'worrying trend' if the ratio continued to increase from 7.5:1 to 7.9:1.

Response from Councillor Carol Bull:

1. There are no zero hour contracts on West Suffolk Council establishment.
2. The numbers of staff who qualified for roles that could be furloughed fluctuated month by month across the Council as we responded to the pandemic. This is because, in line with government guidance for how furloughing applied to the public sector, every effort was firstly made to redeploy staff to assist with the response to the pandemic. It was only where this was not possible that we then considered furloughing those staff who could not carry out their usual role. We had, at the peak over the pandemic over 65 staff redeployed.

Predominantly staff were furloughed from the parts of the Council which are funded by income, for example, the Apex and other heritage roles, due to the cancellation of events and venues being closed. However, we also used it for some staff who were clinically extremely vulnerable and shielding and unable to work from home, where they were in roles that met the qualifying criteria. All staff who have returned to work, have returned on full pay. Those few remaining on furlough are receiving full pay with the difference being met by the Council.

The maximum staff (headcount) who were furloughed was 49 and there are currently 6 staff that remain furloughed.

3. The increase in the Council's ratio of the highest paid employee to the lowest paid employee from 7.5:1 to 7.9:1, which while a marginal increase, is still well within the Hutton range of 12:1.

As highlighted at Council, this is still also very favourable when compared with Suffolk partners. Apologies for the missing data in the table this was an oversight (although as it was acknowledged at Council, the data was contained earlier within the report).

When considering the ratio and how this has fluctuated over recent years, it is important to look back over time. In so doing, this suggests that the ratio is actually stabilising. For instance in 2017, the ratio was 7.8.1. The main driver for the fluctuations over recent years to the slightly lower ratio was the implementation of the 2018 NJC pay award. This national pay award addressed the issues of low pay in the public sector and uplifted lower salaries, in preparation for the government minimum wage requirement of 2020.

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