

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

3 January 2020

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Friday 3 January 2020 at 9:30am.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chairman), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Executive Director (TL), Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety (in part), Head of Strategy and Planning, Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 5 members of the public.

CCSG19/13. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs S. Hart.

CCSG19/14. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

CCSG19/15. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 15 NOVEMBER 2019 - MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Coleman requested that Recommendation 1 of Minute Reference CC19/05 be reworded as follows:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Black, Asian and migrant ethnic communities be added to the list of target groups for the consultation process. It was agreed that the minutes be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation be reworded to include reference to Queer, Black, Asian and migrant ethnic communities.

CCSG19/16. **ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2020-2030 AND NEXT STEPS**

At the last meeting, the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) considered the Council's draft Delivery Plan which detailed actions to become a carbon neutral district and proposed several suggestions to be incorporated. The Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager advised that she had incorporated the suggestions and amended the document accordingly. The revised Environment Strategy including Delivery Plan was detailed at Item 4 to the Agenda.

She requested that Members emailed rewording suggestions to her by Tuesday 7 January 2020 at the latest.

For ease, Agenda Items 4, 5 and 6 would be considered altogether. The Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager led Members through a presentation which contained the Environment Strategy vision and priority areas within the Action Plan, budgetary information, as well as three recommendations for the CCSG's consideration, as follows:

- 1) The draft Consultation Document and Consultation Plan in respect of an Environment Strategy be approved to allow a 12 week consultation on the priorities for the development of a final Environment Strategy and action plan.
- 2) To agree the scope for carbon emissions baseline modelling for Rother District Council.
- 3) That funding at £100,000 per annum (index linked) be approved to progress development delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan and the commitments made at full Council to become carbon neutral by 2030.

During discussion the following salient points were noted:

- Environment Strategy: Vision – it was suggested that reference to sustainable fuel options for vehicles / public transport, particularly in the rural areas be included within the Environment Strategy's vision statement.
- The Action Plan consisted of eight priority areas namely Smart Digital District; Green Economy; Air Quality; Waste; Energy; Biodiversity; Construction and Existing Buildings; and Environmentally Friendly Control.
- Green Economy – it was suggested that the following action be reworded as follows: “the Council worked with partners to encourage the retraining and reskilling of people in retrofit, insulation and environmentally friendly industries to encourage a local ‘green economy’ with particular emphasis on lower economy areas across the district”.
- Air Quality – the CCSG was advised that partnership working had commenced with East Sussex County Council and other local authorities on delivering an Electric Vehicle Plan and charging points across the county / district.
- Biodiversity – work had commenced on developing a bespoke page on the Council's website to demonstrate tree planting progress.
- Listed Buildings – the district had a significant amount of listed buildings. Concern was raised that it would be difficult to upgrade / improve energy efficiency, as listed building regulations were complex and restrictive. The Head of Service Strategy and Planning advised that the Council was legally required to uphold and respect legislation. However, it was anticipated that regulations would change in the future; flexibility in Council policy would be a consideration. It was suggested that Recommendation 1 include reference to the Environment Strategy and action plan being developed with due regard to the Council's review of the Local Plan.

- Frustration was aired that the majority of actions highlighted within the Delivery Plan were not scheduled to be implemented until 2021 onwards. A number of suggested “quick win” projects for immediate launch / implementation were identified as follows: pedestrianise areas in Bexhill Town Centre (outside the Council’s remit); introduce a tree planting initiative; become a paperless organisation for all meetings; encourage waste / recycling bin sharing; all food / drink supplied at the Town Hall to be plant based; encourage cycling and walking; and encourage contractors to be energy efficient etc. The CCSG was reminded that before results could be achieved, it was essential that the Council implemented a policy compliant Environment Strategy / Framework, subject to review and adaption as required. This would require involvement and agreement from partners, a public consultation period, funding and full Council approval; all of which would take time to implement / complete. The finalised Environment Strategy / Framework and proposals were scheduled to be presented to full Council for formal adoption in September 2020.
- A 12 week consultation period would commence on 24 February 2020 to 18 May 2020. It was suggested that the National Farmers Union be added to the list of consultee organisations.
- Three Environment Strategy/Workshops would be held across the district; one in Bexhill, the other two locations were still to be agreed.
- As well as the standard forms of communication e.g. ‘MyAlerts’, media / social media releases, posters etc., information stands would be distributed across the district promoting the consultation process / period. It was suggested that officers sought costs of promoting the consultation period on prominent advertising billboards across the district.
- Specific annual targets would be set to reduce greenhouse emissions particularly from Council owned properties / assets, other fuel supplied sources not controlled by the Council, as well as indirect consequences of the Council’s actions e.g. paper usage etc.
- A budget of £100,000 would be required to develop and deliver the Environment Strategy / Framework which included all staff / resource costs.
- An officer working group / Green Team would be established within the Council to promote ‘culture shift’ across the organisation. Staff views would be sought and progress would be reported to and monitored by the CCSG.

Members were reminded that the Environment Strategy / Framework was a ‘living / working’ document and would be reviewed annually and updated as and when appropriate.

RESOLVED: That Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then onward to Cabinet:

- 1) the draft Consultation Document and Consultation Plan in respect of an Environment Strategy be approved to allow a 12 week consultation on the priorities for the development of a final

Environment Strategy and action plan with due regard to the Council's review of the Local Plan;

- 2) the scope for carbon emissions baseline modelling for Rother District Council be agreed;
- 3) funding of £100,000 per annum (index linked) be approved to progress development and delivery of the Strategy and action plan and the commitments made at full Council to become carbon neutral by 2030;

That Recommendations 4, 5, 6 and 7 be actioned:

- 4) the Environment Strategy: Vision be updated to include reference to sustainable fuel options for vehicles / public transport, particularly in the rural areas;
- 5) the Green Economy action be reworded as identified above;
- 6) the National Farmers Union be added to the list of target consultee organisations; and
- 7) officers sought costs of promoting the Environment Strategy consultation process on prominent billboards across the district.

CCSG19/17. CONSULTATION PLAN

See Minute Reference CCSG19/16.

CCSG19/18. TARGET SETTING

See Minute Reference CCSG19/16.

CCSG19/19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Pension Fund: it was suggested that Cabinet recommend that Rother District Council passed a motion for ESCC Pension Advisers to source alternative investments in non-fossil fuel providers for the pension fund.

Members were advised that the Rural Conference would be held on 27 May 2020 in Battle.

Climate Change Exhibition at Bexhill Museum – 20 January 2020. Councillor Langlands agreed to write a report for the January Members' Bulletin.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet recommend that East Sussex County Council Pension Advisers be requested to source alternative investments in non-fossil fuel providers for the pension fund.

CCSG19/20. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING - JUNE 2020 TBC

The date of the next meeting was proposed to be held after the consultation period had expired and results analysed; Members would be emailed and canvassed on potential dates.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 10:45am.