

**CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP**

25 November 2020

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group meeting held remotely on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 10.00 am

Steering Group Members present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chairman), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Other Members present: Councillors T.J.C. Byrne, P.C. Courtel, C.A. Madeley, A.S. Mier (in part), H.J. Norton, D.B. Oliver and H.L. Timpe.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Assistant Director Resources, Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety, Head of Housing and Community, Head of Strategy and Planning, Environment and Policy Manager, Planning Policy Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: Sue Burton – 1066 Cycling Club, Jason Lavender – High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, Dominic Manning – Rother Environmental Group, David Pankhurst – Rother Association of Local Councils, Richard Watson – Energise Sussex Coast (in part) and 17 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

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**CCSG20/6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Hart.

**CCSG20/7. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Courtel	Personal Interest in so far as he paid a small monthly contribution to Greenpeace.
Gray	Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Environment Group.
Langlands	Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Environment Group.
Prochak	Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Rother Environment Group.
Timpe	Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Environment Group.

## CCSG20/8. **ROTHER ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2020-2030**

The Environment and Policy Manager updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the activities she had undertaken since her appointment in August 2020, as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report and the approach taken to deliver the new Rother Environment Strategy 2020-2030 (ES).

The draft ES was adopted by full Council on 21 September 2020. Additional work was required on the priority areas identified and Appendix 1 to the report detailed both the internal and external functions for Rother District Council (RDC), East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and other external environmental stakeholders / organisations. RDC would proactively engage and attempt to exert influence with any priorities / objectives that were outside of its control.

It was noted that a number of operational staff across the organisation were already delivering some priority areas identified within the ES. It would be important to clarify responsibilities and boundaries and ensure that any work delivered under the ES was not in conflict but positively added to and supported existing efforts. Clear links between the ES and the Council's policies / guidance would be applied, however this would be subject to time and resource demands.

A mapping exercise of the ES had highlighted significant gaps within the Council's current organisation structure to deliver specific priorities, namely active / sustainable transport; green and blue infrastructure; countryside and land management; and energy efficiency / carbon reduction specialist. Five priority areas were being reviewed and therefore Members were reminded that the ES was a "living document" and would be continuously updated, as new evidence emerged.

The consultation exercise had provided some positive feedback and at the last meeting, the CCSG had considered the responses received and incorporated some actions into the ES Action Plan (AP). Members were reminded that the AP would be bolstered by the development of a more comprehensive programme of projects and interventions.

Partnership working was critical and key stakeholders, as well as parish and town councils across the district would be consulted on relevant priority areas within the ES. To improve communication a new webpage had been launched and generic email established specific to the ES.

Members were advised of several ongoing and planned activities for the coming months, namely development of a communication and engagement plan; monitoring and evaluation framework; Corporate Plan, Local Plan and report template reviews; and a review of green spaces management.

The CCSG was asked to consider several recommendations and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members were asked to consider the establishment of a Task and Finish Group (T&FG) to review the Council's Ground Maintenance Contract which was scheduled to expire in 2022, as well as green spaces across the district. The Environment and Policy Manager explained the rationale for establishing a T&FG and suggested some aims and objectives for the T&FG's Terms of Reference. It was also recommended that external expert advice be sought to support and guide a comprehensive review. Three names for the T&FG were suggested, namely Parks, Woodlands, and Green Spaces; Future Parks, Woodlands and Green Spaces; or Valuing Parks, Woodlands and Green Spaces.
- Community Gardens – clarity was sought on whether these areas were considered green spaces. It was confirmed that there was scope to review private / community gardens, resources permitting, as well as include a tree survey.
- Rother was committed to promoting best practice techniques and incentivising employees to adopt new ways of working to reduce the Council's carbon footprint. In future, environmentally sustainable practices would be adopted, where appropriate. A digital suggestion box had been created on MS Teams for staff to submit their innovative ideas and suggestions.
- Important to pursue climate justice and collate the views of those less fortunate and help those who were in poverty, particularly with housing and transport etc.
- A significant challenge would be to resource delivery of the ES. Budget priorities would be considered, and staff roles reviewed to ensure key priorities were achievable and delivered.
- In 2021, an i-Tree eco survey of the urban area of Bexhill could be undertaken within the community. The study would form critical evidence for strategically informing tree management needs of the town, including tree planting and assigning monetary value to trees as public assets. The Environment and Policy Manager was currently advising Bexhill community groups on how such study could be organised.
- A plan of activities for Rother Tree Wardens was under development for commencement in 2021. Interest was being sought from the Tree Wardens to assist with the scheme.

The CCSG was reminded that it would be the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to consider the establishment of a T&FG to review the Council's Ground Maintenance Contract and green spaces across the district. Members were supportive of recommending to Cabinet that the OSC include this on their Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the Climate Change Steering Group recommends to Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include on their Work Programme the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the Grounds Maintenance Contract which was scheduled to expire in 2022 and to include green spaces across the district.

## CCSG20/9. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL GRANTS SCHEMES - AN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

One of the activities identified in Rother's Environment Strategy (ES) was to review the Council's funding mechanisms. A review was completed of the Council's Community Grants Scheme (CGS) in recognition that the Council could directly influence positive environmental change within the district through its funding mechanism.

An analysis was completed which scrutinised grants awarded between the period of 2009 to 2021 and it was noted that 10 grants at a cost of £79,633.50 (7% of the total funding) had been awarded that directly related to environmental projects. It was noted that sport and construction related projects had been awarded the most funding of 49% and 26% respectively.

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) was asked to consider several recommendations and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The CGS was currently funded through the Council's Reserves Budget (RB). As a result of economic pressures, the RB was reducing year-on-year, therefore it would be important to source other funding opportunities.
- Members were reminded that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Steering Group was currently reviewing CIL funding in conjunction with CGS. Therefore, it was considered sensible that an overall (single voice) recommendation be proposed to Cabinet.
- CGS funding was allocated annually in March and September. Dependent on the outcome of the recommendations to Cabinet, the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration advised that the first round of funding could be delayed, if required.
- Important that all projects were supported by the Council's CGS and not just those that were environmentally friendly.
- Encourage applicants to incorporate environmentally friendly practices / products within their projects.
- Generate additional funding schemes to support environmentally friendly projects across the district e.g. establishment of a Council Lottery etc.
- Sourcing external project funding was completed by individual departments and not by one specific officer. Where appropriate resources would be shared, and advice sought from East Sussex County Council.
- Important to explore / source public sector funding and Government grant opportunities to support environmental / climate change projects / initiatives; match funding might be required.

The CCSG requested that their comments on the CGS be considered by the CIL Steering Group for onward recommendation to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the Climate Change Steering Group initiate dialogue with the Community Infrastructure Levy Steering Group on how the Council's funding was allocated in line with the Environment Strategy/Climate Emergency commitments;
- 2) the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Steering Group consider an environmental steer and the Climate Change Steering Group's comments when reviewing the Council's Community Grants Scheme in conjunction with the allocation of CIL funding for onward recommendation to Cabinet; and
- 3) the Council explored and sourced public sector funding Government grant opportunities to support environmental / climate change projects / initiatives.

**CCSG20/10. EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION: LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) set out proposed cycling and walking networks and measures within specific areas of the county. It focused on areas of the county where there was potential to increase levels of cycling and walking, with an emphasis on delivering infrastructure improvements. An established plan enabled ESCC to apply for and secure investment from a range of funding sources.

A public consultation period had been launched on 30 October 2020 and was scheduled to close on 11 December 2020. The Council and members of the public would have the opportunity to comment on the proposed cycling and walking networks and share their ideas for future progression.

Consideration was given to how the Council could support ESCC's LCWIP and whether the document be adopted as part of Rother's Environment Strategy. The Environment and Policy Manager highlighted the following issues:

- Time-consuming large-scale project for the whole of the county (originated in 2017).
- 28 documents / appendices consultation (geographical scale).
- Aims and objectives were unclear.
- Further clarity was required on the role of the Local Access Forum.
- Government requested that the LCWIP focused on main areas to get people walking and cycling. It was expected that this would be translated to a fine-grained analysis to identify what these main areas were e.g. by segmenting into school, commuter, public transport, shopping and leisure journeys. This segmentation appears to be missing.
- Missing criteria in Appendix 6 of the documentation e.g. length of the journey (affect infrastructure development), measure analysis of journeys and lack of segmentation / differentiation of users.

- LCWIP prioritised the coastal strip and larger market towns in the county which were already served by public transport; rural areas limited to car usage. From an environmental perspective, the LCWIP was not supporting the rural areas of Rother that often had very limited or non-existent public transport network and therefore left no alternative but to drive a car.
- School journeys – Government target of 55% by 2025 of 5-10 age groups walking to school. Only six references (mainly Battle – information supplied by 1066 Cycling Club) of school journeys within the LCWIP compared to 50 in Adur and Worthing LCWIP. Cycle / walking routes had been identified on a Bexhill map only, not across the whole district.

During the discussion, the following salient points were noted:

- It was confirmed that the Council’s Cycling and Walking Champion would be consulted before the Council’s response was submitted.
- Request that priority be given to road maintenance e.g. repairing pot holes across the district.
- Introduce cycle lanes on main routes, where permissible.
- Mixed-use cycling / walking pathways enabled pedestrians and cyclists to make their journeys safer; rights of way were shared equally. It was important that rights of way were respected by both parties. Differences of opinion were expressed regarding safety issues.

It was agreed that the comments of the Environment and Policy Manager and the Climate Change Steering Group be included within the Council’s response to the consultation.

**RESOLVED:** That the comments of the Environment and Policy Manager and the Climate Change Steering Group be included within the Council’s response to the consultation.

## CCSG20/11. PAPERLESS PLEDGE

The Environment and Policy Manager requested that the Climate Change Steering Group made a pledge to agree that, in future, they would not receive printed agendas / documentation unless there was a specific reason e.g. health, poor eyesight etc. A small contribution towards one of the actions identified within the Environment Strategy.

For equality reasons, it was important that printed agendas / documentation was made available, however it was suggested that a default system be introduced so that Members / officers could opt-in rather than opt-out to receive printed papers.

To aid future meetings, it was suggested that Democratic Services screen shared all recommendations.

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) was advised that digital information was not carbon zero and that the Council should be mindful that digital was not necessarily clean from a carbon prospective.

Members were supportive of the pledge to become 'paperless' and requested that officers speak to Democratic Services on how this could be implemented; the CCSG be advised of the outcome.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) a default system be introduced so that Members / officers could opt-in rather than opt-out to receive printed papers;
- 2) at future meetings, Democratic Services consider screen sharing recommendations; and
- 3) officers speak to Democratic Services regarding limiting the number of agendas / documentation for meetings and advise the Climate Change Steering Group of the outcome.

## CCSG20/12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

**Monitor Environment Strategy Actions:** Councillor Coleman suggested the following recommendation for the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) to consider:

*That Members of the CCSG be assigned to each department within the Council to monitor actions in relation to the Environment Strategy 2020-2030. This monitoring could include;*

- *meeting with the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio Holder;*
- *meeting with the relevant Head of Service;*
- *observing related Committee meetings;*
- *raising the Environmental Strategy during Committee meetings;*
- *reporting back to the CCSG on any progress or findings; and*
- *the Chairman of the CCSG designated monitoring roles in conversation with Members accounting for Member's workload and availability.*

Concern was raised that some of the CCSG Members were Cabinet Portfolio Holders and therefore already had an extensive workload; it would be difficult to commit to additional work. In general, the CCSG was supportive of the recommendation, however they felt it would be more appropriate to seek Member volunteers across the whole of the Council rather than just CCSG Members. The Chairman recommended that she discussed Councillor Coleman's recommendation with the Chief Executive and Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration to consider the logistics of his suggestion and whether it could be carried out in a light touch way.

**East Sussex Youth Council:** Important to encourage young people to be involved with the Council's Environment Strategy.

**Budget Environment Strategy:** The CCSG was advised that an annual budget of £40,000 had been allocated towards the Environment

Strategy; additional funding would need to be sought from Cabinet. Additional resources would be sought from Government apprenticeship schemes etc.

**Clean Growth UK:** Additional support to deliver and progress some of the actions within the Environment Strategy's Action Plan might be available via Clean Growth UK, a pioneering, university-led innovation network with a hub at Brighton University. Early next year, free student support (30 days) could be offered. The Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration agreed to investigate this option.

**RESOLVED:** That the:

- 1) Chairman discuss Councillor Coleman's recommendation in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration; and
- 2) Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration investigate the option of additional support being supplied by Clean Growth UK (Brighton University).

#### CCSG20/13. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was arranged for Monday 12 April 2021 at 10:00am to be held remotely on MS Teams.

#### **CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 12:15pm.