

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

24 February 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group meeting held remotely on Thursday 24 February 2022 at 2:30pm.

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

Other Members present: Councillors P.C. Courtel, K.M. Harmer, G.F. Stevens, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall (in part).

Advisory Officers in attendance: Deputy Chief Executive, Director – Place and Climate Change and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 2 members of the public via the live webcast.

CCSG21/9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG21/10. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG21/11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 25 NOVEMBER 2020 AND 13 JANUARY 2022 - MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CCSG21/12. PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

At the last meeting, the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) suggested several projects that they would like to see instigated and progressed. The Director – Place and Climate Change had categorised and incorporated all projects into three distinct sections namely Rother District Council (RDC) Deliverable Corporate; RDC Deliverable District; and Third Party Deliverable (RDC Partnership) as detailed in the report. It also included projects incorporated in the Council's Corporate Programme and those that could be subject to applying for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Some projects had and could be actioned, others were subject to policy matters.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Clarity was sought on progress of the comments and recommendations proposed by the CCSG at the meeting held on

25 November 2020, namely formulation of a Grounds Maintenance Contract Task and Finish Group and waste contract. It was clarified that the Joint Waste Partnership had commissioned a study to investigate the establishment of a carbon-neutral fleet. Results of the study would be available from March 2022 and reported to the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee.

- Clarity was also sought on progress of the staff digital suggestion box, climate change target page on the website, tree wardens, the Clean Growth UK led by Brighton University, staff survey and 'green tip of the week' on 'MyAlerts'. Progress was unknown at the meeting and would be sought.
- RDC Deliverable (Corporate) – the CCSG requested the timescales and progress of each project and which ones had already been instigated or were scheduled to commence etc. The Director – Place and Climate Change advised that delivery of the projects would be overseen by the Project Officer (Environment). This position was currently out for recruitment and several applications had been received. Interviews were scheduled to be held and it was anticipated that the new officer would be in post by the end of March / beginning of April. Once appointed, the Project Officer would be responsible for prioritising the projects and instigating those that could be actioned immediately, as well as those that would require additional resources and / or funding. £100,000 per annum had been assigned (this included the officer's salary). Project delivery timescales were unknown at this stage. The Council's primary focus was to deliver both a mixture of balanced short and long-term projects, subject to resources and funding, which benefitted all residents and reduced the carbon footprint across the district. A programme of delivery would be formalised and agreed by Cabinet for the CCSG to oversee and monitor; regular progress would be reported.
- A carbon neutral measurement tool was being used to identify and calculate / map-out the district's carbon footprint; details would be presented at the next meeting.
- All available powers to influence, educate and support residents and businesses (change lifestyle choices) to reduce their carbon footprint would be required.
- Members requested that the pollinator and pesticide policy project be instigated as soon as possible.
- Important that partnership and local community working was successful and continued to be developed to deliver projects efficiently and effectively to ensure the Council's aims were realised for the district, e.g. wildflower verges with East Sussex County Council etc.
- Important to identify when to seek support / advice that required specific expertise, e.g. Sussex Wildlife Trust, Bexhill Environment Group, Energise East Sussex etc. The Director – Place and Climate Change clarified that advice was currently being sought from the Sussex Wildlife Trust regarding work and support they could provide for the Council. Once received this would be incorporated with the Council's Environment Strategy; the CCSG would be kept abreast of developments. Members were reminded that the Environment Strategy was a living document and was continuously evolving and being reviewed / updated.

- Important that the Council focused on progressing a robust Environment Strategy with clear deliverable and realistic actions.
- An impactful way to reduce carbon usage was through the Council's Housing Policy and development of the Local Plan.
- Provide 'pool' electric vehicles for employees to carry out their Council duties. Officers with car allowances be encouraged to use that money to purchase electric vehicles. Viability / practicality research would be required.
- Record measurement of all projects and communicate results to residents via the Council's website and all social media platforms.
- Deliver low carbon retrofitting of Council owned stock, e.g. energy efficient heat pumps, solar panels etc.
- Progress was sought on the tree planting project for Bexhill. Information was not available and Members would be advised of progress after the meeting.
- CIL funding would only apply to infrastructure projects that met CIL strategic criteria (set by the Government). Match-funding opportunities might be available with relevant partners e.g. ESCC.

Progress on instigated projects would be reported at the next meeting. Members were encouraged to consider what the Council's priorities were and to forward project ideas to the Director – Place and Climate Change. Work would commence on project feasibility against benchmarking / baselining and an update would be reported at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) progress on instigated projects, carbon neutral measurement tool and project feasibility against benchmarking / baselining be reported at the next meeting; and
- 2) Members forward project ideas to the Director – Place and Climate Change.

CCSG21/13. COMMUNICATIONS / ENGAGEMENT PLAN (VERBAL)

The Deputy Chief Executive delivered a presentation on the Council's proposed approach to communications and engagement on climate change regarding its aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. The presentation focused on the following key areas:

- the Council's community leadership role;
- engagement and sharing ideas with the community and relevant organisations / partners e.g. local strategic partnership, parish and town councils etc;
- improved communication e.g. using social media platforms;
- promotion and progression of projects;
- develop a 'green' branding e.g. posters for displaying in community centres, village halls etc.;
- measuring impact; service alignment and effective data collation;
- behavioural insights e.g. "make a pledge";
- inspiring motivation and involvement; and

- development of a clear and robust Climate Action Communication Plan to showcase service area project updates.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions and during the discussion, the following was noted:

- creation of a 'green stamp' business accreditation / rating system identifying which organisations were reducing their carbon footprint; scored on carbon ratings and incentives provided e.g. trees for planting etc.;
- it was clarified that there were several on-line measuring tools to measure your carbon footprint;
- check on progress of 'pledge makers' and set-up a reward / discount / certificate scheme once achieved;
- develop ways of generating incentives and competition;
- engagement with young children in local schools to promote carbon reduction ideas;
- develop 'green section' on the website promoting all Council community projects incorporating useful reference links and downloadable resource materials for schools etc.;
- promote 'good news' stories e.g. purchase and development of woodland area in St Marks Ward by Little Common Wood Association; these stories resonant with the public;
- Members were advised of an environmental project of hedgerow planting at the Combe Valley Countryside Park; important to highlight and share this information;
- continuous shared learning with relevant partners; and
- important to source, use and share community expertise.

Members were thanked for their contributions and it was clarified that a Climate Action Communication Plan would be devised in consultation with the joint East Sussex Communications Team and presented at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That a Climate Action Communication Plan be devised in consultation with the joint East Sussex Communications Team and presented at a future meeting.

CCSG21/14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no any other business items proposed.

CCSG21/15. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was arranged for Wednesday 30 March 2022 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 4:03pm.