

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

26 October 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group meeting held remotely on Thursday 26 October 2023 at 2:09pm.

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

Other Members present: Councillors A. Rathbone Ariel.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 11 members of the public via the live webcast.

CCSG23/10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/11. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG23/12. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 - MATTERS ARISING

Clarity was sought on whether funding had been secured regarding the bicycle shelter facilities at the Town Hall. Confirmation was still awaited from Human Resources; Members would be kept abreast of developments.

CCSG23/13. CLIMATE STRATEGY 2023

In 2022/23, in partnership with stakeholders and the local community, a review of the Council's Climate Strategy (CS) was completed. The CS detailed how the Council would use its powers and influence to make the district carbon neutral and reduce its operational emissions to Net Zero by 2030. The report detailed the findings of the Environment Strategy 2020 review, additional evidence base, stakeholder engagement information, as well as local authority best practice methods etc. Additional recommendations received from stakeholders would be considered and included in the document, if relevant. The layout/design of CS would be professionally completed by a graphic designer and copy editor. A copy of the CS and Stakeholder Engagement Tracker was detailed at Appendices A and B respectively to the report.

The review identified that several key areas required refreshment namely, terminology (remove carbon neutral, add net zero), guiding principles, the vision, aims and objectives, as well as the Action Plan.

Members were supportive and recommended approval of the refreshed CS and looked forward to seeing the finalised professional version. It was noted that this version, along with the Action Plan would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting scheduled to be held on 20 November 2023. Once formally adopted by full Council, the CS would be uploaded to the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Climate Strategy 2023 be approved, subject to any amendments from stakeholders; and
- 2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Climate Strategy 2023 at their meeting scheduled to be held on 20 November 2023.

CCSG23/14. **ROTHER DISTRICT GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REPORT - 2021**

Members considered the report of the Environment Strategy Officer which detailed the Council's district-wide greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) for 2021. The data was collated, calculated and published annually by the Government (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero).

In June 2023, the Government published the annual estimated data for local authority and regional GHG. Full details of the district-wide emissions were specified in Appendix A to the report. The key highlights were:

- in 2021, Rother's territorial GHG was 472.6 kilotonnes CO₂ equivalent (ktCO₂e), up 15% 2020, 4% 2019;
- 30%, 29% and 22% of emissions were attributed to transport, domestic and industry respectively. Priority would need to be given to reduce these emissions;
- as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and heating requirements, emissions rose across all sectors during 2020 to 2021; and
- overall, district emissions were not on track to meet the Council's 2030 carbon net zero ambition; annual reports would be presented.

The Environment Strategy Officer confirmed that the installation of the new boilers at the Town Hall would make a small contribution towards reducing the Council's carbon emissions.

Members were advised that the data contributed to the development of the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan which was scheduled to be formally adopted and published at the end of year.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) district-wide emissions be reported annually to track progress of the Environment/Climate Strategy.

CCSG23/15. OPERATIONAL ANNUAL CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report of the Project Officer (Environment) on the Council's Operational Annual Carbon Emissions for 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix A. The report outlined annual 2022/23 data in comparison to the 2019/20 baseline which followed DEFRA's recommended protocols for greenhouse gas emissions reporting. It also included the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions (direct influence), plus Scope 3 (indirect influence – Council had limited control) where data was available. The key highlights were:

- the Council's gross operational emissions for 2022/23 was 1,359.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (TCO₂e) which was 15.4% lower than the baseline year;
- net emissions for Scopes 1 and 2 were 86.7% lower in 2022/23 than 2019/20. This was attributed to a significant reduction in electricity usage and 100% renewable tariff introduced in November 2021; and
- 90% of the Council's emissions arose from Scope 3 e.g. outsourced services such as the Joint Waste Contract (821.5 TCO₂e) and Leisure Centres (298.2 TCO₂e).

During the discussion, the following was raised:

- clarity was sought on whether the Pension Scheme, which currently invested in fossil fuel companies, counted towards the Council's operational emissions. The Project Officer (Environment) advised that, at present, the pension scheme was not included. Scope 3 was a large complex area, the intention going forward as reporting procedures improved, would be to include more activities in this reporting profile;
- concern was raised regarding the high percentage of emissions that was linked to the Council's waste collection and leisure services. Reassurance was given that carbon reduction / net zero emissions would be a high priority when re-negotiating contracts. The Environment Strategy Officer confirmed that these areas were included within the Climate Strategy Action Plan; and
- de-carbonisation technologies / biofuels were more expensive, therefore the cost of future contracts could increase significantly. Important to advise the public, the potential of increased costs against the reduction of services e.g. closure of toilets etc.

Members were advised that the data contributed to the development of the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan which was scheduled to be formally adopted and published at the end of year. The report would be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the Operational Annual Carbon Emissions Report 2022/23 be noted.

CCSG23/16. HOME UPGRADE GRANT 2 - OCTOBER 2023 UPDATE

The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) provided energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating via local authority funding. The Council was part of a consortium with Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council and Lewes District Council (LDC) to deliver HUG2. LDC would be the administrating authority with support from officers at each authority. A grant of just over £6m had been awarded to be spent in 2023/24 to 2024/25.

The funding would be used to upgrade 40 homes up to 31 March 2023, and a further 260 homes in 2024/25 across all four authorities. The report detailed the funding criteria along with the percentages / sums allocated for different properties (detached, semi-detached, end of terrace etc.). A list of pre-approved properties had been provided by the Government.

Initially, properties (including private rented) with an EPC rating of F and G would be targeted and the scope would be widened, if required. Letters would be sent, and if further promotion was necessary, the Council's social media platforms would be used. Next year, a programme would be developed to target private rented homes.

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) agreed that the scheme would provide energy efficient upgrades and low-carbon heating to disadvantaged households across the district and would reduce district-wide emissions, supporting the Council's climate ambitions.

The HUG2 was scheduled to be publicised on the Council's 'MyAlerts' platform shortly.

A progress report would be presented to the CCSG at the meeting scheduled to be held on 25 April 2024.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) progress of the Home Upgrade Grant 2 and the report be noted;
and
- 2) a progress report be presented to the Climate Change Steering Group at the meeting scheduled to be held on 25 April 2024.

CCSG23/17. PROJECT SUMMARY - UPDATE

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill: Applications had been submitted to the Coronation Living Heritage Fund for ‘micro woods’ in urban areas and a grants scheme for community orchards. Bexhill had been recognised as a [Tree City of the World](#).
- Reduce Village Halls Carbon Emissions and Install Electric Vehicle Charging Points: Phase 1 was completed in June 2023 with bespoke decarbonisation plans issued to 39 participating halls. Pre-grant funding offers had been made to 34 halls for measures that would save an expected 2,250+ tonnes of CO2e over the next 25 years. The Council’s procurement services had been offered.
- Plant More Wildflower Areas on Green Spaces: Further planting to prolong the aesthetics of the Marina Gardens wildflower meadows whilst retaining or enhancing opportunities for biodiversity had been agreed.
- Incentivise Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) to adopt Climate Emergency Policies and encourage Biodiversity Audits: It was noted that eight P&TCs had declared a climate emergency and a further three were considering declaring after receiving support from the Environment Strategy Officer.
- De-Carbonise Waste Fleet: Discussions had commenced across the Joint Waste Partnership regarding extending the current contract from 2026 up to 2033. The use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil would be considered as part of the negotiations, along with providing best value for money.
- Carbon Literacy Training for Council Officers: In September 2023, a further eight officers received carbon literacy training; the total number of officers fully trained was 30. An agreed roll-out programme to all staff would commence and mandatory training would be delivered to all new starters, subject to resources. The training was advertised to staff on the Council’s intranet. Corporate agreement had been received to strive for the “Going for Gold” standard.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Members were advised that the next round of Government funding had re-opened; an application would be submitted shortly, with updated costs. Important to ensure value for money was achieved. Other funding opportunity streams might be available in the future.

The CCSG was impressed that Bexhill had been recognised as a Tree City of the World. The condition of some of the trees (stumps) and planting requirements of De La Warr Road and Westville Road were highlighted. The Chair agreed to raise these issues with the East Sussex County Council’s Highway Steward. Advice would also be sought from the Parks Teams and a Biodiversity report would be presented at the next meeting scheduled to be held on 30 November 2023. Members were advised that development of a Tree Strategy for the district was included within the Climate Strategy Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG23/18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- It was clarified that the minutes of all of the Climate Change Steering Group's (CCSG) "formal" and "informal" meetings were uploaded to the Council's website at the following links: [Browse meetings - Climate Change Steering Group - Rother District Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) and [Our climate action so far – Rother District Council](#) respectively. The Environment Strategy Officer confirmed that the Climate Web Pages would be refreshed, and clearer links would be incorporated.
- Two public Electric Vehicle Charging Points were located in Cinque Ports Street in Rye.
- Climate Emergency UK had published their Council Climate Action Scorecards. Rother District Council had scored 16%, which was the lowest in East Sussex. The Environment Strategy Officer clarified that this was extremely disappointing, was not 100% accurate, and the Council was aware of the low score. The Council had the opportunity to challenge the score with Climate Emergency UK and had submitted additional evidence. Unfortunately, the additional evidence was not taken into consideration. A meeting would be held with Climate Emergency UK to discuss all issues.
- New housing developments e.g. Worsham Farm Development, at northeast Bexhill. The CCSG felt it was important that where reduced carbon net zero products / materials were being delivered in new housing developments, that this should be shared with the public and publicised / communicated by the Council. Officers were unable to comment on the detail of the Worsham Farm development.

CCSG23/19. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING - 30 NOVEMBER 2023, 2:00PM

The date of the next "informal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 30 November 2023 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:54pm.