



Climate Change Steering Group

Date and Time - Thursday 25 April 2024 – 3:00pm

Venue - Formal Remote Meeting

Councillors appointed to the Steering Group:

Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, T.M. Killeen (MBE) and P.N. Osborne.

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**
To receive any disclosures by Members of disclosable pecuniary interests / other registerable interests / non-registerable interests in matters on the agenda and the nature of any interest and details of any dispensations obtained. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.
3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 28 MARCH 2024 - MATTERS ARISING** (Pages 3 - 10)
4. **CLEAN GROWTH UK - NET ZERO BUSINESS AND PROJECT PRESENTATION**
5. **HOME UPGRADE GRANT 2 - APRIL 2024 - VERBAL UPDATE**
6. **MICRO WOODS PROJECTS UPDATE** (Pages 11 - 14)
7. **CORONATION COMMUNITY ORCHARDS GRANT SCHEME** (Pages 15 - 18)
8. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT - APRIL 2024** (Pages 19 - 32)
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
10. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING, TBC, 2:00PM**

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Agenda Despatch Date: 19 April 2024

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Rother District Council

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28 March 2024



Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, T.M. Killeen (MBE) (in part), and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members Present: Councillors S. Burton and A. Rathbone Ariel.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Climate Strategy Officer, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG23/50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/51. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

CCSG23/52. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 29 FEBRUARY 2024 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

There were no matters arising.

CCSG23/53. CLIMATE STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3: RESOURCE CONSUMPTION AND WASTE – UK ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 IMPACT ON WASTE COLLECTIONS, STREET AND BEACH CLEANSING SERVICES

(4)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on progress regarding the implementation of the UK Environment Act 2021 and the potential extension to the Council’s current Waste Collections, Street and Beach Cleansing Services Contract.

The Environment Act (EA) became law in November 2021 and several new waste policies were introduced, namely packaging extended producer responsibility (pEPR); deposit return scheme (DRS); simpler recycling; waste prevention programme; and environmental targets. The report detailed the requirements of the different policies / schemes and timescales for implementation. Provisions of the (EA) would have a

significant impact on society once they were fully implemented over the next few years. At this stage, it was difficult to quantify what this would mean for the Joint Waste Partnership (JWP), the Council, and the district.

From March 2026 onwards, there would be significant changes to dry recyclable, plastic, food, garden and residual waste collections, as detailed in the report. Clarification was awaited on the introduction of some of the new policies and whether additional funding would be forthcoming and made available to the JWP. The JWP Office had responded to numerous invitations to consult on all aspects of the new legislation and further consultations were ongoing regarding more detailed aspects of payment mechanisms and business packaging consultation. Following feedback from consultations, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) continued to discuss the pEPR and DRS scheme designs with industry to reduce the costs of implementation, where possible. The Joint Waste and Recycling Committee (JWRC) was being kept abreast of all developments.

DEFRA had awarded the Council £300,000, £30,000 and £716,000 ('New Burdens' funding) for the purchase of food waste caddies, communal wheelie bins, and food waste collection vehicles, respectively. The cost of liners could amount to approximately £830,000 per annum for the JWP. Ongoing revenue implications would be a factor going forward and the service design was still to be finalised. Future funding might be generated by the pEPR system. Hydro Vegetable Oil (HVO) vehicles would be used to deliver the service across the JWP. However, the additional cost might prove unaffordable despite the 'New Burdens' funding provided. Officers were engaging with Biffa (the contractor) to fully understand all issues.

The CCSG was advised that the current depot facilities would not have the capacity to accommodate the additional vehicles for the collection of food waste and therefore it was critical that an additional suitable depot space was identified and acquired. Unfortunately, at present the Council did not own a suitable site. The site at Elva Way owned by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had become available and was considered suitable, subject to planning permission and operating licences, as it had previously been used as a highways depot. Biffa had confirmed that it was suitable for a waste depot, however further investment would be required to make it fit-for-purpose. Cabinet had approved the purchase which was being progressed by officers. The Chair confirmed that she had heard, as a Member of ESCC, that the sale of the site had been formally approved. A request for depot 'New Burdens' funding was sent to DEFRA on 8 February 2024 based on the purchase of the site; to date no response had been received.

The current contract with Biffa was scheduled to end on 29 June 2026. Biffa had significantly improved waste service performance and a 7-year extension was currently being negotiated, including EA requirements, as well as all financial implications.

Significant capital and revenue commitments would be required by the Council to implement a food waste collection service, as the current funding would not cover the full costs required to deliver the service.

The CCSG would be kept abreast of developments and Members were encouraged to view the JWRC meetings which could be found at the following link [Browse meetings - Joint Waste and Recycling Committee - Councillors Committees - Wealden District Council](#).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG23/54. **GREEN TEAM WASTE AUDIT RESULTS**

(5)

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) received and considered the results of the Green Team's Waste Audit that was completed from 4 to 8 December 2023 at the Town Hall and Amherst Road buildings. The findings were detailed at Appendix A to the report, which highlighted that recycling rates were higher where general waste and recycling bins were co-located and that some paper and plastic waste could be avoidable through behaviour change.

Six recommendations were reported to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 20 March 2024, as follows:

- i. general and recycling waste bins be co-located to increase recycling rates;
- ii. decrease the number of general and recycling waste bins to reduce the over-consumption of bin bags as a source of plastic waste;
- iii. improved signage at bin locations confirming what could/could not be recycled, to improve recycling rates and decrease contamination.
- iv. introduce glass and soft plastic recycling to improve recycling rates and decrease recycling contamination;
- v. Green Team to expedite progress on their objective to review paper consumption and develop initiatives to reduce printing, and therefore reduce paper waste; and
- vi. internal communications by the Green Team to encourage the use of reusable drink cups and bottles and reusable food containers to reduce single-use plastic.

Members were advised that implementation of the recommendations could see a 35% and 22% reduction in the number of items being thrown into general and recycling waste, respectively. Recommendations (i) would require a one-off cost of approximately £1,500 to £2,200 and (iv) an annual cost of approximately £925 for glass and soft plastic recycling collections. For the first year, costs would be drawn from the 2023/24 Climate Strategy Budget. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to calculate the emissions that would be saved from implementing the recommendations. Approval had been received from SLT to implement all the recommendations, which would be instigated after the Easter break.

Going forward the Green Team would be focusing on standardising all waste collection areas across both buildings; improved signage; glass recycling bin purchased and installed in the car park; staff behaviour changes; monitoring paper consumption; introducing single use plastics e.g. reusable cups (branded); and "Terracycle" initiatives e.g. zero waste boxes (to recycle the unrecyclable). New initiatives coming forward would be presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.

The CCSG was pleased to hear that staff involvement had been extremely positive, fully supportive of the recommendations proposed and agreed that they would assist in reducing the Council's carbon footprint and was a step towards the Council's commitment to become net zero by 2030.

RESOLVED: That the findings and recommendations be noted.

CCSG23/55. ROTHER FOOD PARTNERSHIP – VERBAL UPDATE

(6)

The Climate Strategy Officer advised that the Hastings and Rother Food Partnership had split into two and the newly formed Rother Food Partnership now sat with Rother Voluntary Action (RVA). She had met with the Partnership Co-ordinator who was keen to work closely with the Council from a climate perspective. Historically, the Food Partnership had focused on the emergency provision. This would continue to form a key part going forward, but RVA was keen to expand the Partnership to include all parts of the food system e.g. growers, supplies etc. A launch event was scheduled to be held on 23 April 2024 and the Climate Strategy Officer confirmed that she would be delivering a talk about the Council's Climate Strategy, focusing on the themes of Resource Consumption and Waste.

CCSG23/56. CULTURE DECLARES EMERGENCY, SOUTH EAST CULTURAL ASSEMBLY – 22 APRIL 2024

(7)

Members were advised of the South East Cultural Assembly on "How do we free ourselves to take action for climate justice?" that was scheduled to be held on Monday 22 April 2024, 10:00am to 5:00pm at the De La Warr Pavilion. An opportunity to explore pathways to action by nurturing enquiry, participation, community-building, radical care, and collaboration by bringing diverse stakeholders together. The event was free and Members were encouraged to attend by either emailing info@onca.org.uk or booking on-line at [South East Cultural Assembly Tickets, Mon 22 Apr 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#). Both Climate officers confirmed that they would be attending the event. In future, a joint event hosted with the Council would be considered / investigated.

CCSG23/57. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – MARCH 2024

(8)

The Climate Projects Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the refreshed Climate Action Plan Progress Report – March 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Fund Energy Efficiency Measures in Community Assets through Community Infrastructure Levy, UKSPF: As at 19 February 2024, five halls had received funds and completed works, 10 had signed grant funding agreements, seven were pending. Eight halls had received offers for at least 50% funding for solar panels. Members

were advised that Battle Town Council had commenced calculating their operational emissions carbon footprint.

- Work with Parish and Town Councils and other Community groups to engage and educate residents: The Climate Strategy Officer (CSO) advised that she had delivered a presentation to Crowhurst Parish Council. She was scheduled to deliver further presentations to Northiam and Bodiam Parish Councils on 18 April 2024 and 2 May 2024, respectively. It was noted that Brede Parish Council had not made a declaration but had agreed to set up a Climate Action Working Group.
- Support Retrofit Skills Partnership: The Council had hosted a Retrofit Awareness Course funded by East Sussex County Council (as part of the Retrofit Skills Strategy). The course was delivered by East Sussex College and offered to staff across the authority (including both Climate Officers).
- Fund Businesses' Decarbonisation Plans with Capital Grants for Net Zero Infrastructure: The CSO had delivered a presentation on the Council's Climate Strategy to Rye Chamber of Commerce and discussed plans to engage businesses with the Clean Growth UK Project.
- New Local Plan – Refurbishment Energy Standards Set through Policy: The Local Plan Review was now available on the Council's website at the following link: [Local Plan Review – Rother District Council](#).

Transport – Objective 2.1 Sustainable Forms of Transport are Supported through the Planning System:

- Work with Local Transport Authority and Transport for Southeast to ensure Rother's interests are met: It was clarified that the Council had responded to the LTP4.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council Staff: It was clarified that 53 officers had completed Carbon Literacy Training.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- RDC Scope 1&2 emissions reduced by 50% year-on-year from 19/20 baseline: 2023-24 emissions would be reported in September 2024.
- Introduce a decision-making tool that includes carbon impacts: On 4 April 2024, Members would be receiving a briefing on the Carbon and Co-Benefits Tool. Two officer sessions were scheduled for April 2024.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.2 Increased, Repair, Reuse and Recycling of Goods and Materials:

- Work in Partnership with Local Voluntary and Community Groups to Reduce Food Waste: The CSO confirmed that she had attended the first meeting of the Rother Food Partnership (RFP). A launch event was scheduled to be held on 22 April 2024; the CSO would be presenting the Council's Climate Strategy focusing on resource consumption and waste and how it related to the RFP.

- Introduce Food Waste Collection from Operational Buildings: Currently, there was no local provision for food waste collections.
- Introduce Glass Collection from Operational Buildings: A recommendation to introduce glass collections was presented to Senior Leadership Team; outcome was awaited.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Work in Partnership with Relevant Organisations to Improve the Health of the Water Environments in the District: The CSO attended a Combe Valley Catchment Sub-Group on 13 March 2024 which included a strategy workshop and update on carp removal.
- Introduce Conditions to New Lease Agreements: Members were advised that an Interim Strategic Assets and Estates Manager had been appointed. The first meeting to consider the development of a Strategic Assets Management Plan had been held.
- Eliminate use of Pesticides, Herbicides, and Peat in Council Grounds Maintenance: Proposals would be forwarded to the Head of Neighbourhood Services and a report presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Deliver on Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy: Proposed site for a Micro Woods would be Seabourne Road Recreation Ground, Pebsham, subject to further checks.
- Work in Partnership with Parish and Town Councils to Carry Out Biodiversity Audits and Create Management Plans to Enhance Biodiversity and Increase Carbon Sequestration in Parks and Open Spaces: The CSO had advised that she had attended the first meeting of the Northiam Biodiversity Working Group to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the village.
- Audit Council Green Assets to Provide a Baseline for Biodiversity: Seven reports had been received and would be uploaded to the Council's website as soon as accessibility issues had been resolved.
- Adopt the County-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Website launched [Sussex Nature Recovery | Sussex Nature Recovery](#).

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Support Local Community Renewable Energy Creation: Eight village halls with the best potential were to be offered Government grants towards solar, covering a minimum of 50% of costs. The remainder would be covered by Energise Sussex Coast or halls could match-fund to buy panels outright.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.2 Support Renewable Energy Generation:

- Carry out Heat Demand Mapping: Procurement was ongoing.

CCSG23/58. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
(9)

The following any other business item was discussed:

- The Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme would be open for applications from Monday 1 April 2024. Grants of £500 up to £5,000 could be applied for towards the cost of planting at least five fruit or nut trees in a new or existing community orchard. Projects would need to be completed and grants claimed by 1 March 2025. Plants could only be purchased from certified / accredited businesses and/or organisations. A list was available on the Council's website at the following link: [Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme – Rother District Council](#). It was understood that there was only one located in East Sussex. The Climate Strategy Officer confirmed that she would be contacting them to advise that they might receive several plants enquires over the next few weeks/months.

CCSG23/59. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(10)

The date of the next "formal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 25 April 2024 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:10pm

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Rother District Council

Report to:	Climate Change Steering Group
Date:	25 April 2024
Title:	Micro Woods Projects update
Report of:	Climate Projects Officer
Ward(s):	Rye & Winchelsea, South Battle and Telham, Bexhill Pebsham & St Michaels
Purpose of Report:	To update the Steering Group on the progress of the Micro Woods projects and proposed sites for planting.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the progress of the projects to date be noted.

Introduction

1. In October 2023 the Council were successful in a grant application to the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Coronation Living Heritage Fund for £27,149 to plant urban micro woods in Battle, Bexhill and Rye.
2. It was resolved at Cabinet on [11 December 2023](#) that the Director – Place and Climate Change accept the funding and be granted delegated authority to procure goods and contracts as necessary for the completion of the Micro Woods projects, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Analysis / Details of the proposed sites

3. The Climate Projects Officer has liaised with Parks and Estates Officers, Town Councils, Tree Wardens, local community groups, East Sussex County Council and Southern to identify eligible and suitable sites of around 200m² for planting a micro wood in each of the specified towns.
4. All suggested sites were reviewed against the reports and documents listed below, where applicable, to assess eligibility and suitability for micro wood planting, taking into account the intensive soil preparation that is required using the stipulated method of planting.
 - [Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy](#)
 - Biodiversity Audits of Council Assets (2023)
 - [Woodland Opportunity Map for Sussex](#)
 - [Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Sussex](#)
 - [On-site or nearby Designations](#)
 - [On-site or bordering Tree Protection Orders](#)
5. Other considerations, such as proximity to residences, use by the local community and access (for plant equipment, deliveries etc.) were also

considered. Advice was received from Natural England’s Woodland Creation service for sites in Battle and Rye and is pending for Bexhill.

6. The proposed sites and plots are pending underground infrastructure surveys.
7. The proposed site in Battle is at the recreation ground at Coronation Gardens. The indicative plot for the micro wood is shown in Figures 1 and 2. (This site will be subject to liaison with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.)



Fig 1: Aerial view of proposed plot at Coronation Gardens Rec. Fig 2: Ground view of proposed plot on Coronation Gardens Rec

8. The proposed site in Rye is at Mason’s Field. The indicative plot for the micro wood is shown in Figures 3 and 4.



Fig.3: Aerial view of proposed plot at Mason’s Field

Fig. 4: Ground view of proposed plot at Mason’s Field

9. The proposed site in Bexhill is Seabourne Road Recreation ground, Pebsham. Due to existing trees and play equipment, the proposal is to split the micro wood over two 100m² plots (as approved by DEFRA). These indicative plots are



Fig 5: Aerial view of two proposed plots at Seabourne Rd rec.



Fig 5: Ground view of two proposed plots at Seabourne Rd rec.

shown in Figures 5 - 7.



Fig 7: Ground view of proposed plot 2 at Seabourne Rd rec.

Options

10. 21 sites in total were reviewed, as suggested by those listed at paragraph 4. The proposed sites above are considered the most suitable for micro wood planting, however, alternative viable sites have been identified should issues be identified in the underground infrastructure surveys.

Next steps

11. Further advice will be sought from Natural England to confirm the appropriate mix of tree species for each site, and trees must then be procured from a nursery that meets the [Plant Healthy](#) standard.
12. Community Tree Planting events will be organised at each of the sites over the Winter of 2024/25. To date, 16 local groups have expressed interest in coordinating groups of volunteers to help plant these micro woods.

Implications

Financial Implications

13. The Micro Woods Project is included in the Council's Capital Programme with a budget of £27,149. The scheme is not expected to require additional capital investment by the Council over and above the DEFRA grant award.
14. Any unused funds on 31 March 2025 are to be returned to DEFRA.
15. The Miyawaki method of planting micro woods has higher initial costs than traditional tree planting, due to the requirement for intensive soil preparation, mulching, and watering during establishment. This, however, results in long-term savings from the reduced need for ongoing maintenance, the fast growth and establishment rates of the trees, and the increased resilience and survival rates of the trees.

Legal Implications

16. The three proposed sites are owned and managed by Rother District Council and therefore do not require any agreements with third-party landowners.

Other Implications

17. Environmental: Through the addition of soil improvers and dense planting of native tree and shrub species, micro woods create biodiversity-rich woodland habitats. They aim to reconstruct indigenous woodlands to enable the delivery of benefits for people, wildlife, biosecurity, and ecosystem services.
18. Micro woods are well suited to urban and degraded soils, where they assist in restoring the soil biome and improving soil carbon sequestration, whilst creating green spaces that connect communities with nature as a permanent reminder of the coronation of King Charles III, linking with the King's lifelong support of the natural environment.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	Yes	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	None.
Relevant previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.

Rother District Council

Report to:	Climate Change Steering Group
Date:	25 April 2024
Title:	Coronation Community Orchards Grant Scheme
Report of:	Climate Projects Officer
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To update the steering group on the progress of the delivery of the Community Orchard Grant Scheme.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED: That progress and timeframes of the scheme be noted.

Introduction

1. In October 2023, the Council was successful in an application to Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Coronation Living Heritage Fund for Community Orchards. A grant of £49,024.50 was awarded, to deliver an onward grants scheme to local groups for the planting of Community Orchards in Rother.
2. At Cabinet on [11 December 2023](#), delegated authority was granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept this funding and award grants as appropriate to deliver the Community Orchard Grants scheme, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Details of the scheme

3. The scheme opened for applications on Monday 1 April 2024 and is operating on a first come first served basis.
4. Applications are invited from properly constituted, non-profit organisations for grants of £500 to £5,000 towards the capital costs of planting fruit or nut trees in a new or existing community orchard.
5. Eligible Coronation Community Orchard projects will involve the planting of 5 or more trees and provide a benefit to a Rother community. A benefit could be engaging the community in setting up, planting, or maintaining the orchard, or giving the community free access to the orchard on a permanent or occasional basis for leisure and recreation, activities, and events or to harvest the fruit.
6. Eligible grant expenditure includes trees, tree protection (e.g. spirals, canes, fencing etc.), soil enhancers (e.g. mulch or compost), equipment (e.g. spades, gloves, benches etc.) and signage to dedicate the site to the Coronation of King Charles III.

7. The grants do not cover expenses relating to salaries, consultancy fees, staff/volunteer expenses, land purchase or rental, or costs relating to the establishment and maintenance of the trees beyond initial planting.
8. Full details and the application form can be found on the [Coronation Community Orchard Grant Scheme webpage](#) and [Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme Eligibility page](#).
9. Guidance for designing and [planning a Coronation Community Orchard](#) has also been created, signposting applicants to specialist advice and encouraging the planting of local Sussex fruit varieties.
10. To ensure this scheme is accessible to a wide variety of community groups, including those that may have little or no financial reserves, 75% of the grant award will be paid upfront upon signing a grant funding agreement with the Council, with the final 25% paid on project completion.

Scheme Conclusion

11. The application window will remain open until either all available grant funding has been allocated, or until midnight Friday 28 June 2024, whichever is sooner.
12. Projects must be completed and grants claimed in full by 1 March 2025.
13. The Council must submit details of each grant-funded Community Orchard project to DEFRA no later than 31 March 2025.

Implications

Financial Implications

14. The Community Orchard Grants scheme is included in the Council's Capital Programme with a budget of £49,024.50. The scheme does not require additional capital investment by the Council over and above the DEFRA grant award.
15. Failure of any applicant to complete a project will result in a request for repayment of any funding received in full. Any unused capital funds as at 31 March 2025 are to be returned to DEFRA.

Legal Implications

16. Successful applicants will be subject to a formal grant funding agreement with the Council. Full terms and conditions will be provided to organisations once an application has been approved.
17. All necessary consents including planning are the responsibility of the applicant.

Other Implications

18. Environmental: Community Orchards provide a focal point for community activities whilst improving the natural environment and increasing biodiversity. The Coronation Living Heritage Fund seeks to create green spaces and

connect communities with nature as a permanent reminder of the coronation of King Charles III, linking with the King's lifelong support of the natural environment.

19. DEFRA stipulates that trees under this scheme must be purchased from a certified [Plant Healthy nursery](#), with the aim of halting the spread of damaging plant pests and diseases. There are three certified nurseries in Sussex.
20. Equalities and Diversity: The scheme encourages applicants to consider the outdoor accessibility guidance produced by The Sensory Trust in the planning of their orchard. This offers advice on how to make the outdoors accessible for everyone, regardless of their disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or belief.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	Yes	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

Chief Executive:	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Elize Manning
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Appendices:	None.
Relevant previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers: Reference Documents:	None.

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Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Outcome 1: The built environment will be net zero and climate resilient.

Objective 1.1 Mass retrofit of existing buildings.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress to date
Access government funding to decarbonise private housing such as HUG2	Applications submitted either in partnership or standalone	£	High	Ongoing	Climate	1200 letters to off-gas Rother properties based on DESNZ data 3663 postcards Camber & Rye 75 referrals across RDC/HBC/LDC and EBC 31 Whole House Surveys across RDC/HBC/LDC and EBC 14 costed schemes – 7 in RDC 15/04/2024 - Report to April CCSG
Fund energy efficiency measures in community assets through CIL, UKSPF	Carbon footprint reports and action plans for community assets produced. Interventions implemented.	£££	High	Ongoing	Climate, Regeneration, Planning	Village Halls Energy Project was approved by full Council Sept '22 following £500k funding from CIL Climate Emergency Bonus Fund. In Jun '23 bespoke Decarbonisation Plans were issued to 39 participating halls. Pre-grant funding offers were made in Oct '23 to 34 halls for measures that would save an expected 2250+ Tonnes CO2e over 25 years. At 16/04/2024, 6 halls have completed works using VHEP grants to a total of £16.5k. A further 10 halls have signed Grant Funding Agreements with RDC to the value of £45K. 10 halls have grants approved in principle, with GFAs pending, to the value of £142.8K. Completing all projects will save an estimated 1,115 Tonnes of CO2e. Awarded REPF funding to two community decarbonisation projects – Sedlescombe Sports Pavilion and Robertsbridge Club. £70,000 remains available – rolling grant window until funds are spent.
Use Environmental Health enforcement mechanisms to improve private	Minimum of 5 homes per year improved because of licensing or	£	Medium	Ongoing	Environmental Health	19/02/24 7 homes improved due to licensing or statutory notices being served since April '23

sector rented accommodation	statutory notices being served					
Work with Parish and Town Councils and other Community groups to engage and educate residents	Minimum of five parish and town councils supported to create climate action plans per year	£	Medium	Ongoing	Climate	<p>At Oct '23, 8 T&PCs have declared a climate emergency (24%) and at least 3 more are considering doing so.</p> <p>19/02/24 CSO shared the RDC Climate Strategy with P&TCs in Jan '24 and offered to support any councils who wish to make a declaration or action plan.</p> <p>CSO attended the Crowhurst Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group in Jan '24</p> <p>CSO to present at the Bodiam Annual Parish Meeting – date confirmed 2nd May</p> <p>CSO to present at the Northiam Annual Parish Meeting – date confirmed 18th April</p> <p>18/03/24 CSO to present at Crowhurst Parish Meeting</p> <p>Brede Parish Council has not made a declaration but has agreed to set up a Climate Action Working Group.</p>
Support Retrofit Skills Partnership	Convene or actively participate in a local retrofit skills partnership	£	Low	Ongoing	Climate, Regeneration	<p>ESCC held a Retrofit Skills workshop in Jun '23. RDC Climate Strategy Officer and Housing Needs Manager attended. ESCC has received funding from DESNZ to develop a Retrofit Skills Strategy for the county. RDC has supported the development of this strategy through the East Sussex Housing Partnership Board.</p> <p>19/02/24 DESNZ have approved ESCC's Retrofit Skills Plan for East Sussex and ESCC has started the pilot projects. Public Health is planning to recruit a Retrofit Skills Partnership and Programme Manager to lead this work. RDC is continuing to support this through the ES Housing Partnership Board, the Energy Partnership Board and the Climate Officer network.</p> <p>Rother Skills Audit is ongoing – Report due May '24. Retrofit and Green Skills form a part of this audit.</p>

						<p>18/03/24 RDC will be hosting a Retrofit Awareness Course, funded by ESCC as part of the Retrofit Skills Strategy. The course will be delivered by East Sussex College and has been offered to Housing, Regen, Estates, Planning and Climate Officers at RDC.</p> <p>Retrofit Awareness Course held on 16/04/2024</p>
Run a series of community engagement events to raise awareness and demystify retrofitting	Host one retrofitting awareness event per year	££	Low	Ongoing	Climate	19/02/24 CSO is collating a list of planned events to attend.
Retrofit Rother District Council operational assets to EPC C or above	Operational assets retrofitted to EPC C	£££	High	Ongoing	Estates	<p>Existing ratings of these assets are yet to be reviewed.</p> <p>An Interim Strategic Assets & Estates Manager has been recruited and has begun developing the Strategic Assets Management Plan.</p>
Train Energy Champions to work with communities	10 Energy Champions trained	££	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Climate	<p>Climate Strategy Officer commissioned the training of a cohort of Energy Champions in Jul '23.</p> <p>19/02/24 Energise Sussex Coast has trained five Energy Champions in Rother since July '23. There are three training sessions individuals must attend to become an Energy Champion. Two more training opportunities are in development for 2024. One of these is likely to be in the Rye area, the other is TBC.</p>
	50 businesses supported to report their carbon footprint and create carbon reduction action plans	£££	High	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Regeneration	<p>19/02/24 CSO met with the Rye Chamber of Commerce to discuss their sustainability ambitions. CSO to present at March Chamber meeting.</p> <p>Finalising agreement to work with Clean Growth UK to deliver Net Zero 360 to 50 businesses in Rother and associated grant scheme. Project due to commence April '24</p> <p>18/03/24 – CSO was the Guest Speaker at the Rye Chamber of Commerce Spring Meeting. CSO gave a presentation on the RDC Climate Strategy and talked about the plans to engage businesses with the Clean Growth UK project.</p> <p>15/04/2024 - Report to April CCSG</p>
Fund businesses' decarbonisation plans with capital grants for net zero infrastructure						

Retrofit Rother District Council-owned accommodation to EPC C or above	All RDC owned accommodation rated EPC C or above	££	Medium	25/26	Housing	Report to Jan '24 CCSG by Housing Solutions Manager.
New Local Plan - refurbishment energy standards set through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	Local Plan Review – Position Statement March 2024
New Local Plan - reuse of buildings rather than demolition encouraged and supported through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
Objective 1.2 New buildings are net zero or carbon negative.						
Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Require Council-led developments to meet best practice net zero standards	Introduce Council-led Development Policy	£	High	23/24 - 24/25	Regeneration, Policy & Projects	19/02/24 Following Jan '24 CCSG discussion CSO has investigated the Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool as an option to replace an interim policy. The tool has been embedded in the Programme Management Framework and officer training will begin in March.
New Local Plan - best practice net zero standards for new buildings to be set through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.



Transport Outcome 2: The need to travel will be reduced, those that do so will be on foot, bike, public transport, or EV.

2.1 Sustainable forms of transport are supported through the planning system.						
Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Work with Local Transport Authority and Transport for the Southeast to ensure Rother's interests are met	Actively participate in partnership, corporate comms	£	High	Ongoing	Climate, Planning Policy	18/03/24 – RDC formally responded to LTP4. Response was prepared by the Planning Policy Manager with support from CSO.

Local Plan - Development Strategy to plan spatially to reduce reliance on personal vehicles through town and village networks and clusters	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
Local Plan - Live Well Locally concept to be an Overall Priority, informing the spatial strategy, site selection and development design.	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Climate, Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.

Objective 2.2 Facilitate the transition to low/ zero carbon vehicles.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Install EV charging infrastructure in RDC car parks	Six RDC car parks across the District with EV chargers installed	£	Medium	23/24 - 24/25	Policy & Projects, Neighbourhood Services, Climate, Estates	In Feb '22 Council approved the installation of EVCPs at nil capital cost. An update to cabinet in Mar '23 presented the outcome of feasibility studies, preliminary site plans and funding, including plans to apply to ORCS . ORCS 2023/24 opened Oct '23. ORCS application submitted Dec '23, revised, for 22 double-headed EVCPs in 6 car parks. £165k funding has been awarded. Expected project delivery by March 2025.
Encourage businesses to install EV charging	10 businesses installed EV charging on-site through Shared Prosperity Funding	£	High	23/24 - 24/25	Regeneration, Climate	19/02/24 Rural Business Grant Programme is open to applicants Rural Business Grants Programme – Rother District Council Rural Business Grants Programme East Sussex County Council
Support businesses to switch to LZC fleet	5 businesses transitioned to Low/Zero Carbon fleet	££	High	23/24 - 24/25	Regeneration, Climate	19/02/24 Rural Business Grant Programme is open to applicants Rural Business Grants Programme – Rother District Council Rural Business Grants Programme East Sussex County Council

Objective 2.3 A programme of activities to promote active travel across the district.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
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Promote behaviour change to encourage active travel through corporate communications	Internal and External RDC Comms, participation in events	£	Medium	Ongoing	Sports, Climate	<p>Inaugural staff commuter survey conducted Mar '23. Findings were reported to CMT and shared on the Staff Notice Board.</p> <p>In Oct '23 a series of Sustainable Travel posts were shared on the Staff Notice Board by the Green Team, and Flexi bus and Govt £2 bus fare cap have been promoted via RDC comms channels.</p>
Climate Awareness Training introduced for all RDC staff	RDC Certified as Gold Level Carbon Literate Organisation	££	Medium	Ongoing	Climate	<p>In Sept '23 the Climate Strategy Officer and Climate Projects Officer delivered the first in-house Carbon Literacy Training to 8 Officers, bringing the total number to have completed this training to 30.</p> <p>CMT have since approved a programme to roll out Carbon Literacy training to all staff, and adopt it into the induction package as mandatory training for new starters.</p> <p>Following training on 27th and 28th Feb, 53 officers have now completed Carbon Literacy Training. A further 50 officers are booked onto future courses.</p> <p>Upcoming officer training dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12th & 13th June • 18th & 19th September • (November – TBC in line with CLAD) <p>Member training offered for March did not achieve the minimum attendees. Alternative dates to be considered.</p> <p>15/04/2024 - RDC application to become a Silver Carbon Literate Organisation is in progress. CSO has been certified as a Carbon Literate Facilitator.</p>



Resource Consumption & Waste Outcome 3: The district will produce less waste and a thriving circular economy.

Objective 3.1 Reduced consumption of resources and waste.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
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RDC Scope 1&2 emissions reduced by 50% year-on-year from 19/20 baseline	Reduce RDC Scope 1&2 emissions by 50% year-on-year from 19/20 baseline	£££	Medium	Ongoing	Climate	In Progress 18/03/24 – 23/24 Emissions to be reported in September '24.
Promote behaviour change to reduce waste through corporate communications	Internal and External RDC Comms, participation in events	£	Medium	Ongoing	Climate	In Dec '23 the Green Team conducted a waste audit, with recommendations to adopt glass and soft-plastics recycling approved by SLT. Initiatives to reduce paper and single-use plastics for food and drink are planned by the Green Team in 2024/25.
Introduce a decision-making tool that includes carbon impacts	Decision-making tool adopted by the Council	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Policy & Projects	19/02/24 SLT has approved the adoption of the Carbon and Co-Benefits Support Tool for all Decision reports. To be implemented from May '24 following Officer and Member training. 18/03/24 – Members Briefing on the Carbon and Co-Benefits Tool scheduled for 4 th April. Two Officer training sessions have also been scheduled for April. 15/04/24 - Member Briefing held on 05/04/24 and first officer training held on 16/04/24
Incorporating sustainable food principles in council catering and at Council-run events where possible	Policy Introduced	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Policy & Projects	To Start
Eliminate single-use plates and cutlery from council catering	Policy for reusable plates and cutlery introduced	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Policy & Projects, Facilities	To Start
Improve procurement policies for operational resources	Policy Introduced	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Policy & Projects	

						Climate Projects Officer sits on ESPH working group to develop a new Sustainable Procurement Policy. Awaiting first draft from ESPH, expected Spring '24.
New Local Plan - seek reuse and recycling of construction materials and waste	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
New Local Plan - water resources minimised. Rain & grey water recycling required through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
New Local Plan - require space for food-growing in new development through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
Objective 3.2 Increased repair, reuse and recycling of goods and materials.						
Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Find activities through the Council's RRR Grants Scheme to reduce consumption and increase repair, re-use and recycling	Rother Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Grant to fund initiatives	££	Medium	Ongoing	Policy & Projects	19/02/24 RRRR grants have been awarded to: Bexhill Environmental Group - £364 towards a new brush cutter Community Compost Solutions - £256 Community Composting Education and Awareness Project Hunter Gatherers - £1,000 Water Saving at Hoads Wood Project The Studio Rye - £453 towards the Gardening Club Project
Work in partnership with local voluntary and community groups to reduce food waste	Participation in formal partnership with terms of reference	£	Low	Ongoing	Climate, Partner Organisations	19/02/24 Rural Community Spaces Improvement Grant for £10,000 funded by REPF awarded to Peasmarsh Parish Council to create a community allotment. RVA is taking on the Rother Food Partnership. CSO to attend the first meeting. 18/03/24 – First meeting of the Rother Food Partnership was attended by the CSO. A separate meeting has also taken place between CSO and Food Partnership Co-ordinator. Launch event

						scheduled for 22 nd April – CSO to present on RDC Climate Strategy, particularly the Resource Consumption and Waste theme and how it relates to the Food Partnership.
Promote Office Swap Shop and related activities	Internal RDC Comms, participation in events	£	Low	Ongoing	Climate	A ‘staff marketplace’ Teams Channel has been created to encourage officers to offer, request and share resources before buying new. This can be used for both work-related and personal items.
Introduce food waste collection from operational buildings	Food waste from operational buildings is recycled	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Facilities, Policy & Projects	Following the Green Team Waste Audit in December 2023, no local provision for food waste collections could be found.
Introduce glass collection from operational buildings	Glass waste from operational buildings is recycled	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Facilities, Policy & Projects	Following the Green Team Waste Audit, recommendations to introduce a glass recycling collection and snack packaging recycling collections have been approved by SLT.



Biodiversity and Land Use

Outcome 4: Nature will be in recovery across the district.

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Objective 4.1 Halt land and marine species decline.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Work in partnership with relevant organisations to improve the health of the water environments in the district	Convene or actively participate in a partnership to improve the health of the water environments in the district	££	Medium	Ongoing	Climate, Partner Organisations	RDC is a formal partner in the Rother and Romney Catchment Partnership and the Cuckmere and Pevensy Catchment Partnership. The Climate Strategy Officer represents RDC at regular Partnership meetings. 18/03/24 – CSO attended the Comb Valley Catchment Sub—Group meeting on 13 th March. Meeting included a strategy workshop and an update on the carp removal.
Introduce conditions to new lease agreements	All new lease agreements from 2024/25 have a Nature Recovery clause	£	Medium	23/24 - 24/25	Estates	Strategic Assets & Estates Manager came into post Jan '24, responsible for developing a Strategic Assets Management Plan. 19/02/24: Recruitment is again underway for the Strategic Assets & Estates Manager post.

Eliminate use of pesticides, herbicides, and peat in council grounds maintenance	Policy Introduced	£	Low	23/24 - 24/25	Parks, Policy & Projects	18/03/24 –A report on proposals to start this project has been requested from the Neighbourhood Services HoS. NS HoS has agreed to bring the report to a future meeting.
Objective 4.2 Increase biodiversity and carbon sequestration.						
Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Deliver on Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy	KPIs from Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy are met	££	Medium	Ongoing	Parks, Climate, Partner Organisations	Over 200 trees were planted on Bexhill streets in Spring 2023 , with around 100 more street trees due to be planted in Autumn / Winter 2023. Coronation Living Heritage Fund will deliver a micro wood and possibly Community Orchards in Bexhill by March 2025. Subject to further checks, the proposed site for the Bexhill Micro Wood is Seabourne Road Recreation Ground, Pebsham. Coronation Community Orchard grants opened for applications on 1st April 2024.
Work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to carry out biodiversity audits and create Management Plans to enhance biodiversity and increase carbon sequestration in parks and open spaces	50% of Town and Parish Councils enhancing their assets for biodiversity and carbon sequestration	£	Medium	Ongoing	Climate, Partner Organisations	T&PCs are to be engaged with Coronation Living Heritage Fund delivery for urban micro woods and Community Orchards grants. 19/02/24 CSO has advised Northiam Parish Council on meeting the Biodiversity Duty. CSO has agreed to attend the first meeting of the Northiam Biodiversity Working Group. 18/03/24 CSO attended the initial meeting of the Northiam Biodiversity Group. Key Stakeholders were brought together to discuss the Biodiversity Duty. Northiam PC are looking to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Village.
Designate a proportion of the RDC estate to 'wilding' and nature recovery	10% of RDC estate designated to 'wilding'	£	Medium	Ongoing	Estates, Parks, Climate	Strategic Assets & Estates Manager came into post Jan '24, responsible for developing a Strategic Assets Management Plan. 19/02/24: Recruitment is again underway for the Strategic Assets & Estates Manager post.

Audit RDC green assets to provide a baseline for biodiversity	Biodiversity Audit Report	££	Medium	23/24 - 24/25	Climate	<p>Provider began biodiversity audit on 23 rural RDC sites in May '23, reports expected Nov '23. Site surveys completed Sept '23.</p> <p>Reports now expected Mar '24.</p> <p>18/03/24 – 7 reports have been received. Once accessibility issues have been fixed, these will go on the RDC webpages and the link shared with CCSG Members.</p> <p>15/04/24 - 9 reports have now been received</p>
Develop District-wide Tree Strategy	Tree Strategy adopted by Council	££	High	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Planning, Parks	To Start
Adopt the county-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Climate and Planning Policy	<p>RDC are a Supporting Authority on the LNRS development. The Planning Policy Manager is representing RDC in the working group.</p> <p>18/03/24 - Sussex Nature Recovery Sussex Nature Recovery website launched</p>
New Local Plan have regard to the LNRS in decision-making through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning	See the Position Statement above.
New Local Plan - Require 20% Biodiversity Net Gain through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning	See the Position Statement above.
New Local Plan - use Natural England standards and guidelines to improve green infrastructure	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.



Energy Generation Outcome 5: Renewable energy will be produced locally.

Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all suitable roof spaces.

Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Participate in collective buying schemes such as Solar Together	Collective buying scheme run annually	£	High	Ongoing	Climate	The contract with the current provider has ended and options for future schemes are being reviewed, coordinated by lead authority WSCC.
Support local community renewable energy creation	Formal partnership with terms of reference and corporate comms	£	High	Ongoing	Planning, Climate	MOU signed with Energise Sussex Coast. 4 Village Halls have accepted VHEP grant offers towards solar, covering a minimum of 50% of costs. The remainder will be covered by Energise Sussex Coast, or match-funded to buy panels outright.
Install Solar PV on RDC Commercial assets	Review of commercial assets for solar potential. Commercial solar business project established.	££	High	Ongoing	Estates, Climate	In Progress
Encourage businesses to install Solar PV	5 businesses installing solar PV through grant funding	£	High	23/24 - 24/25	Regeneration, Climate	19/02/24 Rural Business Grant Programme is open to applicants Rural Business Grants Programme – Rother District Council Rural Business Grants Programme East Sussex County Council
Explore options for solar carports in RDC carparks	Report on solar carport potential of RDC car parks	££	Medium	23/24 - 24/25	Climate, Policy & Projects, Neighbourhood Services, Estates	To Start
New Local Plan - support community energy through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
Objective 5.2 Support renewable energy generation.						
Action	KPI	Cost	Carbon impact	Delivery	Lead Team(s)	Progress
Carry out heat demand mapping	Heat mapping report produced	££	High	23/24 - 24/25	Climate	19/02/24 Spec has been written in partnership with ESCC, WDC, EBC and LDC. Currently out to procurement.

						18/03/24 – Procurement is ongoing.
Encourage businesses to install renewables	5 businesses received funding for renewable installations	££	High	23/24 - 24/25	Regeneration, Climate	19/02/24 Rural Business Grant Programme is open to applicants Rural Business Grants Programme – Rother District Council Rural Business Grants Programme East Sussex County Council 15/04/24 Report to April CCSG
New Local Plan - spatially plan for renewable energy through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
New Local Plan - support and require connection to district heat networks through policy	Policy Included in new Local Plan	£	High	25/26	Planning Policy	See the Position Statement above.
Cost: £ - £1,000 - £10,000 ££ - £10,000 - £100,000 £££ - £100,000+						
Carbon impact (tCO2e): Low - 10s Medium - 100s High - 1000s						

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