

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

15 November 2019

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Friday 15 November 2019 at 9:30am.

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.

Other Members present: Councillor P.C. Courtel (in part).

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director (TL), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety, Head of Housing and Community (in part), Head of Strategy and Planning, Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager, Development Projects Manager, Planning Policy Manager, Neighbourhood Services Manager (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Andy Arnold – East Sussex County Council (in part), Dominic Manning – Rother Environment Group, Richard Watson – Energise East Sussex (in part) and 3 members of the public (in part).

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman advised that despite the Climate Change Steering Group's Terms of Reference stipulating that the meetings would not be open to the public, she had invited three members of the public to attend as they had assisted one of the presenters with information for the meeting. It was clarified that the meeting would be split into two sessions: Part A – to hear the presentations and Part B (after lunch) – to summarise, discussion and develop an action plan. Part B of the meeting would not be open to the public.

CC19/01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

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

CC19/02. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

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 paid a small monthly contribution to Greenpeace.

CC19/03. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**
(3)

At the 30 September 2019 Cabinet meeting, the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) was established and its Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed. The CCSG had been tasked with developing, planning and initiating steps that the Council would need to take to meet a carbon neutral commitment by 2030.

Members considered the ToR and noted the main objectives. The CCSG's main focus would be to present a pre-consultation draft action plan including next step recommendations and resource requirements to full Council for consideration by no later than 24 February 2020.

Consideration was given to whether the CCSG's meetings should be held in public. It was agreed that all meetings be held in public and requested that Cabinet amend the ToR accordingly.

RESOLVED: That all meetings of the Climate Change Steering Group be held in public and that Cabinet amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.

CC19/04. **ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY CURRENT POSITION**
(4)

The Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager apprised the Climate Change Steering Group of the Council's current position regarding preparations for climate change, which also included data analysis and priority proposals. The following key points were noted:

- In 2018, Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions equalled 81% of all greenhouse gases in the UK. This figure was set to rise year-on-year. The Government was committed to reducing greenhouse gases by 100% by 2050.
- UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identified six priority risk areas namely flooding; high temperatures; water supply shortages; natural capital; food production; and pest and diseases.
- Transport had a significant impact on air quality with CO₂ emissions in Rother being the highest in East Sussex.
- Consideration would need to be given to improving superfast and ultrafast broadband across the district; incentivising residents to switch to using electric vehicles, improvements to waste recycling in terms of reduce and reuse, future work practices (flexible working), printing costs and carbon footprint of the Town Hall.
- The main Delivery Plan priorities for the Council would be clean growth, healthy places and sustainable services.
- Resources / expertise would be required for developing, managing, and overseeing the Delivery Plan.

During discussion, the following salient points were noted:

- Significant steps already had been undertaken to improve the sustainability of the Council and reduce the Town Hall's carbon footprint namely new roof / insulation in 2012/13, installation of

double glazing and solar panels (Amherst Road building), as well as an updated lighting and boiler system.

- Rother was committed to improving its waste recycling rates.
- Implement an electric vehicle pool system for employees.
- Introduce different ways of working e.g. a four-day week where employees attend over the course of four days rather than the customary five or encourage employees to work one day per week at home.
- Incentivise staff and residents to use alternative transport methods e.g. cycling and walking etc.
- Promote and advertise best practice techniques or methods to encourage participation.

CC19/05.
(5)

CONSULTATION PLAN

The Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager led the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) through the Consultation Plan for the Council's Environment Strategy 2020. It was noted that the consultation period would be held from 24 February 2020 to 18 May 2020.

Members noted the Council's mission for the consultation process and main target groups which included residents, businesses, public sector organisations, voluntary and environment groups, educational establishments, housing providers, service contractors / partners, Parish and Town Councils and internal departments.

The timetable / milestones for the procedure were noted as follows:

- Monday 27 January 2020 – draft proposals and consultation plan reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Monday 10 February 2020 – Cabinet would consider draft proposals and approve consultation plan.
- 24 February 2020 to 18 May 2020 – consultation period.
- June 2020 – complete analysis of findings and draft report.
- June 2020 – Climate Change Steering Group meet.
- July 2020 – final proposals presented to Cabinet.
- September 2020 – final proposals presented to full Council.

Dependant on the number of responses received during the consultation period, Members were advised that the timetable could be subject to change. However all efforts would be made to ensure that the above timetable was adhered to.

The CCSG was reassured that the Communications Team would be undertaking a wide range of activities to keep the public informed throughout the consultation process including regular press releases, use of social media etc., dedicated pages on the Council's website, posters, stakeholder engagement and events / workshops across the district. Specific questions would be aimed at relevant stakeholders / groups and all responses collated and presented to the CCSG for consideration.

All Members would be encouraged to engage with their residents and raise awareness of the consultation process and where possible hold events in their own Wards. It was considered imperative that stakeholder events were held in public thoroughfare places across the district e.g. De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill Museum, railway stations, community halls etc.

After discussion, it was agreed that hard to reach groups such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) and migrant communities be added to the list of target groups for the consultation process. Members also suggested that local educational establishments be targeted as stakeholders and that all advertising literature be made from recycled materials. A further suggestion was proposed that a dedicated link / page be uploaded to the Council's website where residents / children could make a pledge / public declaration of their intention to reduce carbon emissions by the target date of 2030.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual and migrant communities be added to the list of target groups for the consultation process;
- 2) local educational establishments be targeted as stakeholders;
- 3) all advertising literature be made from recycled materials; and
- 4) a dedicated webpage be established for residents / children to make a pledge / public declaration of their intention to reduce carbon emissions by the target date of 2030.

CC19/06.
(6)

FREIBERG: A CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Development Projects Manager gave a presentation on an inspirational sustainable urban development scheduled to be built in Freiberg, in southwest Germany.

Freiberg was a planning development consisting of 600 carbon neutral community-living homes which included 50% affordable housing, as well as an environmentally-friendly integrated transport / travel system e.g. tram links, cycle and walkways. Passivhaus methods / standards would be used to reduce the developments ecological footprint e.g. ultra-low energy buildings that required little energy for heating or cooling. A solar district heating system would be installed which would integrate the local heating networks for both residential and industrial use. As a result of an ultra-efficient public transport system, it was anticipated that car dependency would significantly decrease.

Members had an opportunity to put forward questions and the following points were noted during the discussion:

- Developers be encouraged to use sustainable planning methods, where appropriate.

- Garden city planning, pedestrianised and self-energy generating methods be considered for all future developments.

CC19/07.
(6) **EAST SUSSEX ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

The Chairman welcomed Andy Arnold of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to the meeting. He led Members through a presentation on the work of the East Sussex Environment Board (ESEB) and strategy to reduce the effects of climate change across East Sussex, which also included a number of successful projects. The following key points were noted:

- The ESEB consisted of a number of Team East Sussex (TES) subgroups which included environmental regulators, relevant stakeholder / partners and East Sussex local authority Members and lead officers.
- The draft Environment Strategy included five environmental themes (climate change, natural world, water, air and resource efficiency), legislation and policy, current evidence, targeted actions, governance, monitoring, reporting and review.
- Significant challenges for the ESEB were increased elderly heat related deaths; essential infrastructure damage; expensive imported food; disruption to supply chains and service provision; and coastal erosion and impact on coastal habitats and wetlands.
- Opportunities to reduce climate change included improved energy efficiency, lower health and social care costs; growth of low carbon sector, less reliance on fossil fuels and relevant adaptations.
- Emissions in East Sussex from all sectors had decreased. The reduction from local transport was significantly less (at -6%) than the domestic sector (-33%) and commercial and industrial sector (-40%). Consequently, transport accounted for the largest share (44%) of total carbon emissions in East Sussex. This was similar to the national picture.
- Long-term aims included:
 - become net zero carbon by 2050 or earlier;
 - adapt to the effects of climate change;
 - conserve, enhance and expand Sussex Natural Capital;
 - meet recommended air quality standards;
 - achieve water consumption targets; and
 - re-distribute waste e.g. food.
- Next steps included consulting with TES, agree roles and responsibilities for actions, draft, finalise and publicise strategy, engage stakeholders regarding actions and report findings to TES in 12 months.

Members had an opportunity to put forward questions and the following points were noted during the discussion:

- Housing stock had a contributing impact on CO₂ emissions and consideration was needed to modify / retrofit properties if there were Government grants available.

- Partnership working would be essential to ensure that cross-authority strategies were complementary and delivered value for money.
- Climate Change Policy / Legislation was established and set by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Local authorities could apply for Government funding to support climate change projects.
- Discussions were being held with Brighton and Hove City Council and West Sussex County Council to co-ordinate / set-up a network of electric vehicle charging points across the South East of England, as well as promote electric vehicle usage.
- Innovative public transport concepts and designs be considered in future developments.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Andy Arnold for his contribution and attendance at the meeting.

CC19/08.
(6)

HOW TO GET A ZERO CARBON FUTURE BY 2030

The Chairman welcomed Richard Watson of Energise East Sussex (EES) to the meeting. He led Members through a detailed presentation on how Rother could become carbon neutral by 2030. The following key points were noted:

- EES provided advice on solar panel systems and how to create carbon zero homes.
- Energy4All was a co-operative of 26 independent renewable-energy organisations with approximately 13,250 members. They worked with communities and provided funding to develop innovative renewable energy projects.
- To generate electricity locally – solar panel systems provided cost efficiency savings and had been installed across the district; Glenleigh Park Primary Academy (660 panels).
- Solar battery systems could power the UK's rail network.
- Invest in off-shore wind turbine systems; the UK had the best off-shore wind capacity in the world.
- Charge My Street was a Community Benefit Society which raised money for the installation of local electric vehicle charge points. Community energy co-operatives were well placed to set-up electric car sharing pools, local charging schemes and community solar storage sites.
- Community energy co-operatives partner with housing developers to supply renewable energy to residents.
- Rural Community Energy Fund was a £10m Government programme which supported rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects providing economic and social benefits to communities.
- Low Carbon Across the South East was an EU funded project established to support businesses with adapting to climate change. Grants of up to £20,000 were available.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Richard Watson for his contribution and attendance at the meeting.

THE LOCAL PICTURE

The Chairman welcomed Dominic Manning of Rother Environment Group to the meeting. He led Members through a detailed presentation on the methods the Council could adopt to become carbon neutral by 2030. Members also considered a number of suggested actions for the Council to adopt that had been tabled at the meeting. The following key points were noted:

- Reduce all carbon emissions by 1/5 per year.
- Ashden and Friends of the Earth had developed an evidence based list of the most effective actions councils could take on climate change:
<https://www.ashden.org/sustainable-energy/climate-emergency-top-actions-for-councils>
- Money:
 - establish a Carbon Offset Fund through Section 106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy; and
 - apply for National Lottery Climate Action funding.
- Homes:
 - enforce minimum energy efficiency standards in private rented sector;
 - work with relevant partners to retro-fit affordable housing homes; and
 - all new properties to be of Passivhaus standards or similar.
- Transport:
 - introduce measures to encourage cycling and walking;
 - establish park-and-ride schemes outside towns;
 - encourage car sharing;
 - all licensed taxis to be electric vehicles;
 - support East Sussex County Council's infrastructure plan;
 - influence change regarding speed limits in residential areas; and
 - all Council contractors to use electric vehicles.
- Council Estate:
 - upgrade properties with energy saving systems;
 - encourage and provide incentives for staff to be energy efficient; and
 - switch to green energy supplier.
- Waste:
 - become a paperless organisation.
- Land:
 - reduce verge cutting and encourage wildflowers.
- Be influential in the local community on all energy efficient measures.
- A significant challenge would be the investment in public transport infrastructure and services.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Dominic Manning for his contribution and attendance at the meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AND ACTION PLANNING

The Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager advised that she had developed a draft Delivery Plan which was tabled at the meeting. The Plan included three separate sections and indicated the actions the Council would need to take to become a carbon neutral organisation, and the actions the Council would need to take, in partnership with others to become a carbon neutral district, as follows:

Section 1: Clean Growth – to include construction, procurement, economic regeneration and energy generation.

Section 2: Healthy Places – to include the Council’s leadership role in the community, travel and transport, biodiversity and fuel poverty.

Section 3: Sustainable Services – to include the Council’s decisions, estate, travel and transport and workforce.

Members considered the contents of the plan and summarised key points discussed earlier. In addition to the actions already highlighted within the Delivery Plan, the following suggestions were recommended to be added:

- Create a dedicated officer post to develop, co-ordinate and oversea climate change projects and actions required.

SECTION 1: CLEAN GROWTH

Construction

- Upgrade the Town Hall and utilise and lease out for income generation and / or possibly relocate to a new sustainable premises.
- Create plastic free towns.
- Pedestrianise / socialise new developments and, in particular town centres.
- Implement policy change on all future developments to deliver Passivhaus standards.
- Encourage developers to include electric charging points in new developments.
- Develop Council sustainability projects to include all energy efficient measures.

Procurement

- Review the procurement strategy with East Sussex County Council and report to Members in the future.

Energy Generation

- Explore options of investment in off-shore wind turbine systems.
- Explore options of solar district heating systems.
- Encourage Parish and Town Councils to become energy efficient.

SECTION 2: HEALTHY PLACES

Our Leadership Role in the Community

- Increase shared services across local authorities.

- Improve waste recycling rates.
- Promote waste reduction, implement plans to recycle clothing.
- Move to three weekly recycling bin collections.
- Explore the option of introducing communal bins in residential areas.

Our Travel and Transport

- Establish a park-and-ride scheme for Battle, Bexhill and Rye.
- Support local community transport initiatives to use electric vehicles.
- Review contracts and encourage all Council contractors to use electric vehicles e.g. waste collection, parks and public convenience cleaning.

Biodiversity

- Explore disposal options for green cuttings.
- Encourage beekeeping across the district.
- Introduce natural or green burials in the district's cemeteries.
- Utilise green or living walls, sustainable and long lasting.

SECTION 3: SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

Our Decisions

- Implement policy change – all licensed taxis to be electric vehicles.
- Install a count-down clock at the Town Hall until the target date of 2030.
- Implement a £10 voluntary levy on Council Tax contributions.
- Include an environmental assessment on all reports.

Our Estate

- Encourage plant-based Mondays (meat free) one day per week at the Council offices.
- Introduce a plastic bottle tax and a deposit return scheme for drinks containers.
- Introduce subsidised cycle-to-work scheme or subsidised bus pass scheme for local authority employees.

Our Workforce

- Become a 'Paperless' Council for all meetings.
- Introduce different ways of working e.g. a four-day week where employees attend over the course of four days rather than the customary five or encourage employees to work one day per week at home.
- Officers introduce new communication strand on 'MyAlerts' called 'green tip of the week'.
- Generate additional funding by establishing a monthly Council 'Environment Lottery', proceeds to be spent on climate change projects across the district.
- Establish an internal Rother Officer Group to complete an energy audit of the Town Hall and create 'climate champions of the month' awards.

Councillor Langlands enthusiastically advised that she was creating a website called "Bexhill Unwrapped". She had contacted the majority of

local businesses in Bexhill to ask what steps they had undertaken to reduce their carbon footprint. The results would be collated, uploaded to a website and shared with the Council.

Members were advised that all of the above suggestions would be incorporated into the Delivery Plan and presented to the Climate Change Steering Group at their next meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) it be recommended that a dedicated officer post be created to develop, co-ordinate and oversea climate change projects and actions required; and
- 2) the above suggestions be considered and where practicable / feasible incorporated into the Council's Delivery Plan and presented at the next meeting.

CC19/11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
(8)

There were no any other business items proposed.

CC19/12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
(9)

The date of the next meeting was arranged for Friday 3 January 2020 at 9:30am to be held in the Council Chamber.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 3:46pm.

CC191115jh