

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	24 April 2023
Title:	Report of the Climate Change Steering Group
Report of:	Climate Change Steering Group
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To summarise the work of the Climate Change Steering Group to address the Climate Emergency since the last public meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group in March 2022.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

Introduction

1. This report summarises the work of the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) carried out between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Background

2. The CCSG was established by Cabinet following the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration on 16 September 2019. The CCSG is comprised of Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak, MBE.
3. The CCSG meet monthly with the Agenda decided by the Members in liaison with officers.
4. The CCSG has met "informally" on the following dates: 12 May 2022, 23 June 2022, 26 July 2022, 31 August 2022, 18 October 2022, 24 November 2022, 23 January 2023, 23 February 2023 and 30 March 2023. The Minutes of the meetings can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link [Our climate action so far – Rother District Council](#).
5. In addition to the Members mentioned above, the following Councillors have also attended CCSG meetings in the last year: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, B.J. Drayson, C.A. Madeley, A.S. Mier, G.F. Stevens, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall.

Completed Projects

6. The following projects have been completed in the last year, with input and oversight of the CCSG:
 - a. Council Emissions Baselineing: In July 2022, the Council's direct emissions data for the baseline year of 2019/20 and the following years 2020/21 and

2021/22 were calculated. A framework is now in place to monitor and capture emissions information on an annual basis, which will be published in an annual Climate and Sustainability report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) every September.

- b. Tree Planting in Bexhill: Following successful application to the Urban Tree Challenge fund, 26 trees were planted on Bexhill streets in Spring 2023: [New Street Trees for Bexhill | Trees for Cities](#) confirms the locations and species. £143,000 of funding was also secured from the Green Recovery Challenge fund to increase tree cover in Bexhill. Planting was complete by end of February 2023 at Bexhill Downs (1,500 whips), Sidley Rec (38 trees) and Southlands Open Space (9 trees).
- c. Urban Forest 1066: The Bexhill i-Tree Eco study began in February 2021 and the final report, titled Urban Forest 1066 was signed off by CCSG in August 2022. This sets out the existing number, type and condition of trees in Bexhill.
- d. Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy: A [Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy](#) was developed by Treeconomics and signed off by CCSG in February 2023, giving recommendations on how to improve tree cover in Bexhill.
- e. Couch to Carbon Zero completed: In line with COP 27 in November 2022, the Council commissioned the Couch to Carbon Zero Sprint, inviting not only Council staff, but all residents and businesses of Rother to join in. This involved a 5-minute video on a different topic each day being received via email, with information and suggestions on how to reduce your personal carbon footprint. A third of staff and Members signed up, as well as 228 Rother residents.

Ongoing Projects

7. The following projects are ongoing:

- a. Village Halls Energy Project: Following a successful application for £500k of funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy Climate Emergency Bonus Fund in June 2022, Phase 1 of the Village Halls Energy Project was launched in February 2023, with Net Zero plans for 39 halls across the district currently in development and expected by 31 May 2023.
- b. Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) installation: On 28 March 2022, Cabinet approved procurement of a provider of EVCPs in off-street Council car parks at nil capital cost to the Council. A funding proposal is currently in progress to the On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme with the remainder of capital costs being covered by the provider. Seven car parks across Battle, Bexhill and Camber are currently included within the proposal having been approved by the Distribution Network Operator. Each car park will support the charging of six electric vehicles, and subject to a successful funding bid, the charge points should be operational by the end of the calendar year.
- c. Biodiversity Audit: In order to provide a baseline for biodiversity across the Council's estate, and set targets for enhancement, a Biodiversity Audit has been commissioned. The Audit will also help the Council prepare for the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which will be mandatory from November 2023.
- d. Parish and Town Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration support: All Parish and Town Councils have been offered assistance with declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency and creating an Action Plan. To date 10 Councils have made declarations.

- e. Replacement of seasonal bedding plants with perennials: From May 2023, seasonal bedding will be replaced with herbaceous perennials, shrubs, hedges or pine trees at Bexhill Cemetery Garden of Remembrance, Polegrove Bowls Club, De La Warr Pavilion Car Park, East Parade and Lanes Gardens. The Environment Strategy Officer has advised the Parks Development Officer on nature friendly planting suggestions, specifically prairie style plating.

Presentations received by the Steering Group

8. Projects Officer (Environment), 23 June 2022 – Council’s Emissions Baseline – Projects Officer (Environment) presented to the CCSG data on the Council’s direct emissions from the baseline year 2021/20 to 2021/22.
9. Projects Officer (Environment), 23 January 2023 – Green Team Report – A report was presented to the CCSG on Green Team activities and achievements from May 2022 – January 2023.
10. Development Projects Manager, 23 January 2023 – Sustainable Procurement - The Developments Project Manager gave a presentation on the sustainability measures that had been implemented and were continuing to be embedded within the Council’s procurement processes / criteria. As an example, he demonstrated the procurement process to appoint the Architect to complete a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the public conveniences at Camber Sands. Officers were working closely with the Procurement Hub to ensure that prospective contractor(s) included sustainability measures within all future contractual bids; development was ongoing.
11. Treeconomics, 23 February 2023 – Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy - The Chair welcomed John Rose of Treeconomics and Kate Sheldon and Suzanne Simmons of Trees for Cities to the meeting, who introduced the Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy (BTPS). The BTPS outlined the Council’s plans in collaboration with Treeconomics, i-Tree and Forest Research to increase the tree canopy across Bexhill, by providing a baseline for the existing urban forest, while strategically exploring opportunities for future planting. The BTPS signposted best practice and guidance regarding planting, care and management of new trees. It detailed information on the urban forest; policy; existing trees and woodland; planting; and monitoring and review.
12. On 23 February 2023, the Director – Place and Climate Change presented to Members details and results of a sustainability challenge he had set himself at the beginning of the financial year to carry out his normal duties without using his car for business mileage (daily commute not included). In order to assist, he had used the ‘transport hierarchy’ and set a target of 100 cycles to work within the financial year. A combination of cycling, use of buses and trains, walking and car share opportunities had been used on all visits made across the district and further afield, with actual travel time not differing that greatly from personal car use only.
13. On 30 March 2023, the Environment Strategy Officer advised the CCSG of the development and progress of the Biodiversity Audit. The first phase of the Biodiversity Audit includes sites owned by the Council which are 0.2ha or larger excluding sites in Bexhill. The Bexhill sites will be addressed in the second phase of the project. The Biodiversity Audit it intended to provide a baseline of

Council owned green assets to facilitate decision making in relation to nature recovery, biodiversity enhancement and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Conclusion

14. Over the past 12 months, the CCSG has met on 10 occasions overseeing the development and implementation of the projects outlined in this report.

Environmental Implications

15. This report is presenting the actions of the CCSG in delivering the Environment Strategy (2020).

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

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Appendices:	None
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None