

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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