

Notes of a Meeting of the Climate Change Working Group - 3 September 2020

Members Present:

Cllr Morgan Rise (Chairman)	Cllr Charlotte Morley
Cllr Peter Barnett (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Robin Perry
Cllr Rodney Bates	Cllr John Skipper
Cllr Vivienne Chapman	
Cllr Edward Hawkins	
Cllr David Lewis	

In Attendance: Cllr Graham Alleway and Cllr Sharon Galliford

Officers present: Natalie Annalls, Keiran Bartlett, Emily Godwin, Mihika Kelkar, Jane Reeves, Jenny Rickard and Eddie Scott

14 Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of previous meeting were agreed on the condition of an amendment to show Councillors Peter Barnett and Sharon Galliford's attendance.

15 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

16 Workshop: Draft Climate Change Action Plan

The Working Group took part in a workshop designed to further prioritize the actions within the Council's draft Climate Change Action Plan.

Prior to the meeting Members of the Working Group completed a Climate Change Action Plan Survey created by officers in order to focus discussions and give a starting point to where Members felt that the highest priority actions lay. Members completed the survey and marked each action point as either high priority, medium priority or low priority. A separate question also sought to give an indication of Members' top 5 priority actions.

The survey was split into 6 sections and each section outlined the actions proposed for each of the 6 key areas (Energy, Buildings and Infrastructure, Transport and Air Quality, Trees and Open Space, Influence: Education and Business, including the Green Economy and General). For the purposes of the Working Group meeting some of the themes were coupled together.

Energy; Buildings and infrastructure

Members were reminded that there were 17 potential actions to be considered for inclusion in the Energy section of the draft Action Plan and 5 potential actions for the Buildings and Infrastructure section. It was also emphasised that reducing the carbon emissions created by the Council's electricity and gas consumption was a significant part of the draft action plan. However it was acknowledged that it was

important to consider the financial and resource feasibility aspects of changing energy suppliers.

It was noted that the actions of joining the Association for Public Service Excellence (ASPE) and the Surrey Energy Partnership, as well as working closer with the Surrey Climate Commission were potentially easy accomplishments and thereby should be prioritised and placed within the first five energy related priorities for the purposes of the draft action plan. In addition it was agreed that Members would be advised of the costs of joining ASPE at a future meeting.

As a result of the Members' survey and arising amendments from the Working Group's discussions the following 10 options were ranked accordingly on consideration of the Energy section of the draft action plan:

1. Ensure low cost technologies such as LED lighting are rolled out across the council estate, including parks and open spaces, to reduce energy use (100% high priority).
 - 1- 5.a. Investigate the potential benefits of joining the Surrey Energy Partnership and liaising with Surrey Climate Commission. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
 - 1-5.b. Examine how APSE can help SHBC and develop municipal energy strategy (37.5% HP, 62.5% MP).
2. Developing an energy strategy for the Council do deliver actions relating to energy (75% HP, 25% MP).
3. Identify external energy efficiency grant funding.(75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
4. Promote the introduction of renewable and low carbon energy. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
5. Work with businesses and citizens across Surrey Heath by providing information and advice on low-cost technologies to reduce energy consumption in (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
6. Explore viability of renewable energy, including solar PV on Council buildings, and identify buildings that are suitable for renewable energy e.g. car parks. (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
7. Examine how the New Green Homes Grant to give up to £5,000 in vouchers for insulation and double-glazing can be promoted by the Council. (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
8. Change to a 100% green energy provider for Council owned and operated buildings. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).

Members commented that it was worthwhile investigating if the Council's current energy supplier had a green option or product. It was also recognised that it would be difficult to transition the Council's energy supply to be 100% green, due to the organisation's building's reliance on gas.

It was recognised that the top three ranking actions were possible direct actions well within the Council's control. It was acknowledged that the differentiation

between the direct and indirect (mainly around partnership working) action was a useful one and it was agreed to add the attributes of direct and indirect to the actions within the draft action plan.

Members agreed the following priority actions in respect of Buildings and Infrastructure as per the results of the Members' survey:

1. Ensure low cost technologies such as LED lighting are rolled out across the council estate, including parks and open spaces, to reduce energy use (100% high priority).
2. Examine the potential to 'green' Council buildings. (37.5% HP, 37.5% MP, 25% LP).
3. Investigate and cost opportunities to reuse water, for example incorporating rainwater harvesting, as part of Council building projects. (35% HP, 75% MP).
4. Promote the 'greening' of buildings in the Borough. (25% HP, 50% MP, 25% LP).

There was an appetite to move towards a ban on single use plastics. It was acknowledged that a complete ban may not be possible and may impact some services more than others, such as the Meals at Home service. The Working Group asked for officers to scope the feasibility of the potential policy and report back to the Working Group at a future meeting.

Whilst it was underlined that the highest Carbon emitting properties lay in the existing housing stock, it was agreed that the Council should review the carbon impact of proposals at the application stage of the planning process. However it was underlined that this would not become a reason for refusing applications.

In addition it was acknowledged that encouragement of schemes which included rainwater harvesting and water reuse was in the process of being included in the Local Plan.

Transport and air quality; trees and open space

The Working Group agreed a need to encourage the use of electric and hydrogen vehicles within the Council and in the wider community. It was noted that the Council should be acquiring electric and hydrogen vehicles when replacing existing fleet vehicles as a minimum. In addition it was agreed that the Council should be providing EV Charging points in its own car parks and encouraging local supermarkets and petrol stations to do the same.

It was recognised that tree-planting, rewilding and projects which entailed a net gain in biodiversity were of significant opportunity with large funding pots attached to them (e.g. through the new requirement for biodiversity net gain on planning applications). In addition there was scope to build upon the Council existing work to rewild roadside verges. However it was acknowledged that such opportunities needed to be balanced by careful planning and an acknowledgement that trees

and housing didn't always positively mix. It was noted that we needed the right trees in the right locations, taking into account the Borough's biodiversity assets.

Members also recognised the preparation of the new Local Plan included consideration of health impact reports and extreme events risk assessments in respect of considering adaptation of buildings in light of Climate Change. The need for the Local Plan to include requirements for battery storage capabilities in new-build properties was also emphasised.

On discussing the results of the Members' Survey it was recognised that there was a natural interconnectedness between the promotion of use of electric vehicles and the partnership working actions.

It was agreed that the following 5 options were the highest priority when considering the Transport and air quality part of the draft action plan:

1. Investigate the potential to increase EV charging points within Council car parks. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
2. Continue to implement and develop agile working practices to reduce employee journeys, as well as business miles. (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
3. Examine the potential to undertake a tree density assessment of the Borough, giving a clear understanding of tree cover in the Borough. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
4. Begin to develop a framework for biodiversity net gain (50% HP, 50% MP).
5. Examine the opportunities to improve green infrastructure networks in the Borough . (50% HP, 50% MP).

It was agreed that the following 8 options were of the highest priority when considering the Trees and Open Space part of the draft action plan:

1. Stop using herbicides, pesticides (eg Glyphosate) on verges. (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
2. Encourage reduced mowing to allow wildflower planting and growth, as well as review the machinery used to undertake works (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
3. Examine the potential to undertake a tree density assessment of the Borough, giving a clear understanding of tree cover in the Borough. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
4. Begin to develop a framework for biodiversity net gain (50% HP, 50% MP).
5. Examine the opportunities to improve green infrastructure networks in the Borough . (50% HP, 50% MP).

6. Facilitate a tree planting and green infrastructure strategy (specific to climate change), taking account of the Borough's biodiversity assets. (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).

7. Investigate the potential to 'rewild' the Borough (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).

8. Examine the opportunity to make best use of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in the Borough in relation to climate change. (50% HP, 25% MP, 25% LP).

Influence – Education and business, including the green economy; General

The actions based on influencing, partnership working, and instigating culture change was discussed by the Working Group. It was suggested that whilst the Council typically targeted improvement in engaging with hard to reach groups However in respect of Climate change it was suggested that efforts should be focussed on working with schools and educational institutions in order to change mentalities towards the issue from below.

It was agreed that in respect of the draft action plan the following actions under the heading of influencing would be prioritised as below, as per the results of the Members' survey:

- 1.** Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs), e.g. to identify funding sources that residents can access (75% HP, 25% MP).
- 2.** Make climate change a priority for decision making, both in terms of procurement processes and officer reports (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 3.** Consider the potential to support or advertise local reuse websites/apps to promote waste reduction in the Borough (62.5% HP, 37.55% MP).
- 4.** Establish a programme of funding for charities or other local initiatives who redistribute surplus food to those in need. (62.5% HP, 37.5% MP).
- 5.** Increase and diversify our communications and engagement on climate change. (62.5% HP, 25.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 6.** Direct resources towards community engagement and behavioural change, with particular emphasis on easy to reach groups. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 7.** Facilitate local events promoting sustainable practices, making best use of the Council's assets (e.g. using vacant units in the SQ etc. (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 8.** Investigate the potential for pop-up units in the Town Centre for local sustainable businesses, for example in vacant units (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).

9. Educate, train and encourage internal procurers and commissioners to review their consumption of goods and services, reduce usage and adopt more environmentally friendly products and procedures (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).

10. Working in partnership with local businesses and organisations to deliver carbon reductions throughout the Borough, focusing on key employment areas (50% HP, 25% MP, 25% LP).

The importance of the creation of a substantial monitoring framework to measure and exemplify progress was emphasised to the Working Group. In addition Members' highlighted the importance of both Councillor and Officer training on Climate change in order to promote a culture shift and a united front on the issue. In addition the Group were advised that Climate Change Champions were already being identified amongst officers.

The Working Group agreed that the following actions under the 'general' heading would be prioritised as below, as per the results of the Members' survey:

- 1.** Embed carbon reduction objectives into all decision-making processes in the Council. (87.5% HP, 12.5% LP).
- 2.** Assess the potential for grant funding, including for an update to the baseline carbon emissions and carbon offsetting. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 3.** Consider how internal budgets are used effectively to value and support work on carbon reduction. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 4.** Create a monitoring framework for the Action Plan to monitor progress. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 5.** Carry out departmental Climate change risk assessments. (75% HP, 12.5% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 6.** Identify Climate Change Champions across the Council's service areas. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 7.** Update carbon emissions baseline to 2019, potentially making use of grant funding from One Carbon World and free advice from the SCATTER tool. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 8.** Identify appropriate ways to support and incentivise internal carbon reduction/offsetting projects. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 9.** Evaluate the need to develop a Surrey Heath Resilience Plan and how this could be facilitated. (62.5% HP, 25% MP, 12.5% LP).
- 10.** Facilitate staff/Councillor awareness training. (50% HP, 37.5% MP, 12.5% LP).

17 Next Steps

The Working Group were advised that the next steps would include the proposed actions being taken by officers to a corporate officer level. A feasibility assessment to evaluate the resource and financial implications of the action plan would also need to be conducted.

It was advised that the next meeting of the group was likely to be in late November.