

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM on WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor L Pepper (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, G Driscoll, R Freeman, B Light and G Smith

Invitees: N Davies (Youth Council) and E Gildea (Resident)

Officers in attendance: C Fiddy (Climate Change Project Officer), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director – Public Services) and J Starr (Community Officer).

ECC1 WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Her introduction is appended to the minutes.

All attendees introduced themselves.

ECC2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from J Cornwall-Jones, P Gadd, Councillor R Pavitt and J Richards. It was noted that T Roberts had stood down from the group.

ECC3 DRAFT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Change Project Officer introduced the draft Climate Action Plan and invited comments. She highlighted the difficulties of working out strict timelines for the most innovative projects that are national pilots and for which there are currently no established delivery models. She summarised each proposed action and comments have been recorded against each category of the Plan.

Initial general comments:

- The Action Plan language needed to be consistent with the Climate Change Strategy.
- The need for a route map towards carbon zero delivery by 2030.
- Concern about use of words “deliverable” and “able to be resourced” as these were largely unknowns.
- The need to explain acronyms e.g. LULUCF.
- The need for stronger ambition, milestones, target dates and some ideas of costs to be shown.

Initiatives in the category ‘**Control**’

Domestic energy:

- The possibility of engagement in reverse energy auctions

- Involvement through the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Look to move towards green tariffs.
- The need for consistent messages on the website.
- The idea of new builds in Uttlesford being demonstrators and exemplar.
- Housing Revenue Account implications in terms of the development budget.
- The need for connectivity with the Local Plan
- The need to calculate full carbon footprint around building materials.
- Green finance modelling together with the prospects of grant funding.
- Council will apply for monies from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund early next year. No certainty re future funding rounds. Housing Associations can apply through a local authority. Probably best to be part of a consortium.

Governance:

- The need for carbon accounting.
- Concerns that the Plan should be for the District Council, rather than looking to hold others to account.
- Work with Procurement Officers to specify carbon footprints.

Land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)

- Cllr Smith to approach MP as to possible dates for the Environment Bill.
- Concerns as to how biodiversity is measured- needs to go to the bottom of the food chain.
- Guidelines from Natural England highlighted.
- Mapping opportunities- Essex CC to roll out UDC's project. Water River East to link in.

Public Sector:

- Possible use of churches as cooling centres but would require cool air to be pushed through.
- Possible use of electric vehicles car pools, electric minibuses, zero carbon vehicles allied to cost of insurance concerns.

Surface transport:

- Possibility of DEFRA grant funding for improved air quality monitoring.
- Carry out an independent study of traffic hotspots. This would cost around £500 and was supported.
- EV charging points- future payments through debit and credit cards and the need to engage with Parish Councils re demand at village halls.
- Mapping of EV charging points on-going. Essex CC currently looking for a new recruit to lead on Electric Vehicles.
- Good publicity to be gained for UDC through achievements to date on EV charging points.
- Possible transition to having an electric UDC fleet, possibility of solar panels on refuse vehicles.
- Possible refurbishment of refuse vehicles.
- Very high costs of replacement of refuse vehicles.

N Davies left the meeting at 8.30 pm

E Gildea left the meeting at 8.45 pm

Initiatives in the category '**Collaborate**'

Domestic energy:

- The need to identify the size of the private rented sector.
- A climate change checklist will need to be compiled by a consultant

Surface transport:

- Local Highways Panel focus on safety issues. Any applications would have to be submitted by November for consideration in the next calendar year. Need to look for support from all four County Councillors within Uttlesford.
- Cycling strategy- possible initiatives to seek funding for at Great Dunmow.
- Concerns that cycle paths also need funds for maintenance.
- Cyclists need to be trained and there needs to be a change of mindset that prioritises people and cycles above cars.
- Need to consider workers utilising e-bikes as well as residents.
- The need for mapping to join things up.

Councillor Freeman left the meeting at 9.05 pm.

At this point the Chair asked remaining attendees whether there were any other issues in the Plan to be commented on.

- Concerns expressed that in respect of school travel there was an apparent movement away from buses to cars and that there was a need to open dialogue with Essex CC on this subject. Reference was made to the Essex bus strategy on the Essex CC website.
- Complications in respect of operating licenses and lack of bus drivers were highlighted.
- Look to improve taxis and private fleet in Uttlesford should be included in the Action Plan.
- How best could the Action Plan be monitored? The need for SMART targets.
- Next steps were clarified. Comments made from this meeting would be considered and incorporated into the Action Plan. Targets, milestones and measurements would be included where possible before the Action Plan was taken forward to Scrutiny Committee. The Climate Change Project Officer said that she was always available to take on board further comments.
- The role of the Scrutiny Committee was explained in that it was there to make constructive suggestions but that ultimately it was for Cabinet to approve the Action Plan.

The Chair summed up and thanked all attendees; she said that her intention was to become more visible as we emerge from the pandemic.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

Opening remarks from Councillor Pepper:

Good evening. I would like to start by welcoming everyone here tonight.

The timing to present our Climate Crisis Action Plan couldn't be more fitting for what we have witnessed this year. Severe drought, fires, flooding, storms and melting ice.

The world is sending us a very loud and urgent message "climate change is real and it's happening NOW!"

The pandemic has taught us some valuable lessons. The crucial role scientific and medical experts play in important decision making.

We have also learnt we can work at home and host meetings over video conferencing. Not necessarily choosing to holiday abroad. We have walked and cycled more often and appreciated how vital our open green space is for our mental health and well-being. Taking in the pleasure of watching our wonderful wildlife and breathing in cleaner air. Our air quality improved significantly during lockdown because of reduced traffic movements.

We have been given the perfect opportunity to build back greener. This should be our sole focus. Supporting the transition to a low carbon future and taking a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Experience has shown that local government is a good place to start government commitment to climate emergency action and they are fundamental in the climate emergency response.

To date, Uttlesford have declared a Climate and Ecological emergency and established a Climate Working Group.

We have published an Interim Climate Change Planning Policy document which every developer receives. They are aware that Uttlesford are serious about mitigating climate change and addressing our biodiversity crisis.

Our Climate Crisis Strategy Plan provided a user -friendly way to explain to all age groups what key climate action we will address and why this is necessary. We are promoting "Green Champions", in every sector in Uttlesford and Council will be the exemplar.

We are regarded by Essex County Council as an energetic climate council, and this has provided us with additional influence and a voice at County Council level.

Our full time Climate Officer has been working hard on our Climate Crisis Action Plan, focusing on our two largest CO2 emitters Transport and Energy and our Biodiversity Crisis and looking at how we can wisely spend our £1m climate budget over three years.

Before Chloe starts going through our Climate Crisis Action Plan, I would like to reiterate this is a live document that can be updated on a regular basis.

We will start off with a brief introduction and any guests will have an opportunity to speak at the beginning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our contributors tonight for their time and input. It has been greatly appreciated. Thank you to Chloe for her hard efforts and for Officers time tonight.