

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM, on TUESDAY, 31 MAY 2022 at 7.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: B Brown (Assistant Director - Environmental Services), A Lindsell (Democratic Services Officer) and M Watts (Environmental Health Manager - Protection)

ECC1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from the Landscape Officer.

There were no declarations of interest.

ECC2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 February 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

ECC3 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Chair noted that 80% of current emissions were from the fleet's refuse trucks. She explained that the Climate Change Commission supported end of life replacement which delayed positive action.

Councillor Pavitt said that the Climate Change Action Plan had not been embedded in the Council's strategy and elsewhere in the organisation nobody seemed to take notice. He said that the Climate Change Action Plan needed highlighting at every level to state what the Council is working towards and was incumbent on senior management embracing the plan.

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services agreed that climate change had not received sufficient attention throughout the Council to date, in part as a result of Covid. He said that the opportunity needed to be grabbed as the Council returns to the offices to ensure that each service had a number of individuals paying attention to the climate change aims.

The Chair confirmed that they were looking to employ two Climate Change Officers to deliver their plan.

Councillor Caton said that there had not been a corporate approach to climate change to date and noted his disappointment regarding the lack of documentation to measure success, progress or the forward plan.

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services noted that the Green House Gas Emissions Annual Report was published today on the website and demonstrated good progress. He confirmed that regular briefings and meetings took place with Senior Management and the Chief Executive to help move the agenda forward.

Councillor Caton acknowledged that the Chief Executive had taken charge of the Action Plan and made it more corporate. He said that the Energy and Climate Change Working Group (ECCWG) should drive the action plan and needed to be more pro-active to ensure delivery.

Councillor Pavitt left the meeting.

The Chair acknowledged the need to measure progress and said that the ECCWG should be proud that despite the lack of resources, the plan remained on target.

Councillor Light concurred with Councillors Pavitt and Caton and said that the environmental policies needed to be incorporated into all council policies and functions to ensure the carbon footprint is reduced. She said that more action and decisions were required to increase the impact of the ECCWG.

In response to a question from Councillor Light the Assistant Director of Environmental Services confirmed that the biomass of food waste is recycled and that the plant produced energy from the decomposition process, which the Council did not receive direct benefit from due to the site location.

The Chair highlighted the need to encourage residents to access the recycling information that was available on the Council website, to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of individual portfolios and related responsibilities.

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services confirmed that the process of embedding the climate change requirements within each service was underway, to ensure Officers were up to speed and delivering, and that regular review would highlight areas of slippage. He confirmed that the outgoing Climate Change Officer had reviewed the corporate report process and had suggested a process that required further consideration.

Councillor Caton noted their concern relating to energy efficiency within the Council's housing stock and requested a review of the NORSE partnership to understand their environmental impact.

The Chair acknowledged that this was a topic priority six months ago, before the energy price increases and reiterated the availability of funding available for low income households.

The Environmental Health Manager for Protection reiterated the importance of making the housing stock as energy efficient as possible. He noted the need to provide more renewable energy and adequate insulation for homes to negate the need for the expensive installation of heat pumps and offered to discuss grant schemes and their limitations at the next meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the Council had been awarded £1.2million for energy and £500,000 for DEFRA funding to improve air quality, as part of a pilot scheme for sustainable transport hubs.

The Environmental Health Manager for Protection provided a report detailing the Green House Gas Review which was circulated to Members.

Councillor Driscoll noted that Transport For London had recently published year on year figures which highlighted a 151% increase in serious injury and death as a result of electric scooter usage. He did not support the provision of electric scooters.

The Environmental Health Manager for Protection confirmed that:

- The installation of solar panels on five of the fleet vehicles would be completed this year
- Ten of the frontline vehicles would come to their end of life within four years. Replacement options were under investigation
- Several areas could be served by electric vehicles, poor range, cost and availability remain determining considerations with electric replacements costing twice the diesel equivalent

RESOLVED: Members noted the progress on the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan set out in paragraphs 15 to 16 and contained within appendix one.

ECC4 PRIORITY AREAS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE EXPENDITURE (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Chair reported that:

- Comments had been received regarding a perceived lack of spending from the Climate Change budget
- The allocation of funding to council housing was being investigated
- The bio-diversity survey had been undertaken
- The funding of an Ecology Officer to undertake further research was being investigated
- Key focuses remained transport, biodiversity and the appointment of a replacement and additional Climate Officers
- £80,000 of the £1m had been spent, predominantly on the biodiversity and transport surveys. They had focussed on the local cycling and walking infrastructure, highlighting potential improvements and had been well participated by residents, with 2000 responses.
- The website launch is anticipated and would keep residents updated on actions completed and related constraints

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services agreed to circulate the specific breakdown of the expenditure after the meeting.

The Environmental Health Manager for Protection noted the need to maximise the opportunities of the DEFRA funding and confirmed that he had put a

proposal forward to the Corporate Management Team which had tentative approval and could require £40k out of the climate change budget in 2024. The proposal would require a senior project officer, climate change officer and a support officer to focus on transportation issues and drive the climate change strategy.

ECC5 SAFFRON WALDEN CLEAN AIR INITIATIVE (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Environmental Health Manager – Protection provided a verbal report on the Saffron Walden Clean Air Initiative.

- Diffusion tube monitoring stations have been extended to cover all the schools within the district
- The Air Quality Management Area existed due to previous failure to meet air quality objectives. They have improved and have not exceeded objective levels in the last four years, although complacency was not encouraged
- New regulations were anticipated in the autumn
- A successful application to the DEFRA Air Quality grant was split into two lots, linked to Air Quality Action Plans and open to all English local authorities with projects linked to improving public awareness and dealing with particulate matter
- A grant of £517k was granted to provide a holistic approach to improve air quality in Saffron Walden as a small market town. The trial measures initiative would aim to reduce particulate matter and NO₂ and emissions to improve air quality and focus on behaviour change and develop air quality interventions that could be implemented elsewhere
- The Saffron Walden Clean Air Initiative (SWCAI) menu included:
 - i. Awareness, education and behaviour change
 - School engagement and education - £27k
 - Wood burning particulate matter monitoring and engagement - £45k
 - Business engagement - £28k
 - Town wide air pollution awareness and behaviour change - £53k
 - ii. Clean air pilot schemes
 - Zero emissions delivery service - £50k
 - Try before you buy bike scheme - £37k
 - E-cargo bike community hire scheme - £15k
 - Electric vehicle car club - £41k
 - E-bike hire scheme - £64k
 - Market Square pedestrianisation - £15k
 - iii. Traffic management scheme
 - Saffron Walden Traffic Management Strategy - £30k + £40k S106
 - Town Centre Parking and Servicing Strategy - £28k
 - HGV Access and Routing Strategy - £15k
 - iv. Enhanced monitoring
- Funding for monitoring had not been successful, but there was £10k available for monitoring, particularly for particulate matter
- DEFRA approval was required to change any of the objectives
- A Project Manager was required
- Resources would be pooled with Climate Change to maximise the opportunities for change

- Governance was proposed to be via ECCWG with core milestones reported to the Council's Joint Executive Team and Full Council
- Reporting requirements included quarterly progress reports and a final evaluation report upon completion

Councillor Light thanked The Environmental Health Manager for Protection for his work on the Air Quality Initiative.

Councillor Light left the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Environmental Health Manager for Protection for securing the funding and congratulated them on the achievement. They asked when the roles would be advertised and the Environmental Health Manager for Protection confirmed that the roles would be advertised imminently.

The Chair requested that Members put forward funding objectives for consideration. In response to a question from Councillor Driscoll the Chair confirmed that she communicated monthly with parishes, suggesting grant schemes and areas for climate reduction and decarbonisation. She noted that Essex County Council have £20k available in grant funding to establish grass roots level engagement

Councillor Driscoll said that many Parish Councils did not own buildings or land and so could not participate.

Councillor Caton said that voluntary organisations should also be considered, not just Parish Councils.

The Chair said that she hoped to launch the new website once the new Climate Officer commenced work, and that they would offer new solutions and ideas to promote the biodiversity agenda.

ECC6 **FUTURE WORKING GROUP MEETINGS AND ARRANGEMENTS (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Democratic Services Officer proposed scheduling quarterly Climate Change Working Group meetings and the following dates were agreed:

- Wednesday 7 September 2022
- Wednesday 7 December 2022
- Wednesday 1 March 2023
- Wednesday 3 May 2023

Members agreed that they preferred Wednesday meetings and requested that the dates were circulated.

The meeting closed at 20:37