

Councillor Pepper – Portfolio Holder for Environment & Green Issues

Council – Thursday, 8 October

Climate Change

There have been many challenges during the past couple of months however, we have seen several positive pandemic benefits. We saw a vast improvement in our air quality and the bees benefited too because they had a much better sense of smell. The UK workforce learnt to work and host virtual meetings from home. Bikes increased in sales as well as plant seeds and badminton sets. More people have been buying locally and cycling and taking time to walk in the countryside. People are more aware of nature and their outdoor green surroundings and how important it is for our mental health and well-being.

Although the coronavirus lockdown temporarily cleared the skies, it has done nothing to cool the climate, which needs deeper, longer-term measures. Even though it may have caused a reduction of around 5.5% of the global total, it still wouldn't come close to bringing the 1.5C global temperature within reach. **Global emissions need to fall by 7.6 % every year this decade (nearly 2,800MtCO₂ in 2020), in order to limit warming to less than 1.5C.**

The climate crisis continues unabated.

All our climate sub groups (transport/air quality, ecology, energy, waste & planning & development), have had virtual meetings, along with cross-party councillors, environmental officers & invited local residents. We are currently working towards our latest Climate Local Strategy and Action Plan draft that clearly outlines our climate ten year action plan, starting with short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-4 years), & long term (6-10 years) targets.

It's important that Council leads on the climate agenda. We have outside LED lighting, bike racks, a water filter, x2 electric vans, x4 EV charging points to be installed, most council members are working from home (200+ staff members) and our meetings (including public meetings), are all currently held via zoom. We will be switching to a green tariff in October. This will half the council's carbon footprint and shows that we are fully commitment.

A comprehensive draft Interim Climate Planning Policy has also been produced for new developments that provides a clear UDC Climate Commitment and will back-up our Planning Committee's robust green requirements.

All town and parish councils have been invited to submit to UDC native tree and/or hedging planting proposals on land in their ownership for the 2020-21 planting season. Successful schemes will be provided with the plant stock and sundries, ordered, paid for, and delivered to site by UDC, for planting to be arranged and undertaken by the town or parish council. The scheme is restricted to proposals

which include not less than 5 trees, or 10m of hedging plants. For further details of the scheme please contact UDC's Landscape Officer (bsmeeden@uttlesford.gov.uk).

We have developed better communication with ECC and Essex Wildlife Trust to establish environmentally what each organization is doing within Uttlesford. And we've had meetings with ECC and other councils in Essex to discuss our key climate objectives and working towards a closer relationship. Discussions have taken place regarding funding for cycling, tree planting, EV on street charging points and insulation.

Equalities

As a first step towards a better understanding what our minority communities experience, Council members will attend an Equalities Training course and Black Lives Matter webinar that will be held in Autumn of this year (to coincide with Black History month in October).

Community Listening Events designed together with other community leaders, partner organisations, residents and staff will follow. Their primary role is to listen to Uttlesford's Black and Minority Ethnic community and to understand the different local challenges they may face.

An Independently chaired panel will also be set up to help shape the Community Listening Events team to support and oversee the relevant activities required (this is at the early stages of assembling).