

**ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM on WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2022 at 7.00 pm**

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

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

Also present: C Dodge and J Ashe

**ECC14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

**ECC15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 September 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

In response to a question from the Chair, Councillor Smith confirmed that he had written to and spoken to the local Member of Parliament to ask for an extension in order to implement the Sustainable Warmth scheme properly and to spend the money that had been allocated. They had said that they were following up with the department.

The Chair said that a £15k grant for middle income families had been announced the previous week and could be used for insulation, solar panels and heat pumps. The grant would be released in April 2023.

The Environmental Health Manager – Protection said that there were currently several different sources of funding available that would be covered later in the meeting, and that currently ECO4's main objective was to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable households. He said that take up would determine the number of properties that were contacted by energy improvement.

**ECC16 DISTRICT WIDE COMMUNITY DECARBONISATION PROJECTS**

Chris Dodge from Saffron Walden Community Energy gave a presentation on the Littlebury Village Kickstart Project, followed by a Q and A session.

He said that:

- The District Council had provided £5k funding for the project, which aimed to provide a road map for similar communities in the district
- Phase one, information gathering had concluded, surveys had been conducted, case studies researched, a report had been produced and an open day had been held
- They had learned that only 15% of homes in Littlebury were energy efficient, against a national average of 42% EPC band C or better
- Barriers to zero carbon had been identified as cost, regulations, poor responses to public engagement, insufficient trades people and lack of easily available expertise.
- It was noted that grants were available, but often not widely known about
- Phase two would include further discussion with residents and the Parish Council, to include funding, volunteer input, supporting residents in working out the best solutions to common issues and exploring community scale projects
- Next steps would include establishing a project stakeholder group and a funded project coordinator and grant applications to the Zero Carbon Community Fund and Essex County Council
- There had been interest from a number of other parishes in the district and it was hoped that the process could be replicated so that resources could be shared among the groups

In response to Members questions the following comments were made:

- The bespoke renewable heat network designed for Swaffham Prior was comparable in size and of a similar profile, but had cost £10 - £12million and homes were only being linked up to it in the summer of 2022 so could not yet demonstrate success
- Renewable heat networks were often linked to powerplants, and were more common in inner cities, as the rural environment was more challenging
- Heat pumps could be achievable for complete restoration projects where installation was improved
- Local procurement was important, it would help if the Council would support development of the skills required locally
- Working as a community was really positive, they make recommendations and support one another in knowing what had been successful and conversely, what had not been.

Members discussed:

- The value in investigating renewable heat networks across the country and abroad to identify what can be achieved and how
- The importance of funding expert knowledge
- The importance of identifying honourable trades people and flagging up cowboys who undertake poor installations that could negate mortgages and could cause real issues for homeowners
- Adding details of the project's achievements and process to the website

The Chair thanked the two public speakers for attending and said that she was very happy to support their project.

## ECC17 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Environmental Health Manager – Protection introduced the new Climate Change Lead Officer who presented the Climate Change Action Plan Highlight Report.

She recommended that Members note:

- The progress on the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan set out below and contained within Appendix 1
- The highlights, arising issues, follow-on actions, and forward plan proposed by the Climate Change, Lead Officer

She said that:

- A more formal overview of achievements would be provided in quarter 4 to revise and update the plan
- Often complete actions generated additional action requirements
- Further consideration needed to be given to community engagement
- Additional work was necessary to access funding through the business development team
- Positive highlights included moving towards delivering the various e-schemes, useful conversations with the County Council about infrastructure, influencing development and utilising S106 to positively influence. The transport studies were also underway and were an opportunity to align recommendations with the right people
- There was a delay to the housing stock condition survey, which would be completed by Uttlesford NORSE, who had a new contract manager in post. Issues had been taken up by the Chief Executive and an update would be provided once the issues had been addressed
- Work had continued with the planners on the number of actions which inter-relate to the Local Plan, and county wide milestones relating to the nature network strategy and mapping would be consulted on in 2023

The Environmental Health Manager – Protection said that:

- Domestic energy progress in Uttlesford was quite low
- The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) would provide energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating to households that were low income, off the gas grid, and had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) between D and G and would run from April 2023 until March 2025.
- Uttlesford had been allocated £576,000 from central government, based on the deprivation index, assuming measures in place of £18,000 for 32 homes, whereas Braintree, Castle Point and Harlow had all been allocated £3.6million from the scheme
- The air quality DEFRA funded work had been delayed for 6 months. The money had been received and had not yet been spent

Following questions from Members, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services said that:

- There was not yet clear evidence supporting the productivity of the solar panels fitted to the vehicles, due to the poor weather. They would however be closely monitored
- There had been several demonstrations of electric vehicles during recent weeks, including a heavy goods vehicle and a dustcart, which unfortunately ran out of charge halfway through the round.

The Chair asked the Assistant Director of Environmental Services for a rundown of the future of the Council's fleet. She said that Essex County Council want to achieve zero landfill by 2030, which could impact what type and number of vehicles the District Council would need.

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services said that:

- A detailed review was underway and suggested that an additional meeting was held in January 2023 to work through waste in detail. This would include the implications on how collections were executed and the results of a formal consultation from DEFRA which should inform future decisions
- The County Council had a legal requirement to dispose of non-recyclable waste and wanted to avoid landfill
- There had been a long legal dispute between the County Council and the contractor that previously treated our non-recyclable waste
- It was essential that the system worked
- The caveat to the introduction of an incinerator could be investment in recycling to ensure only the bare minimum was incinerated

Members discussed:

- The value in also considering hydrogen fuelled vehicles alongside the electric vehicles recently considered, if only for comparison
- The benefits of the flexi arrangements now in place for staff
- The additional electric vehicles proposed for NORSE by 2025
- The additional buses being run by the County Council
- Continued tree planting opportunities at Stansted Airport

*Councillor Driscoll the meeting left at 8.08pm.*

RESOLVED:

- The progress on the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan was noted
- The highlights, arising issues, follow-on actions, and forward plan were noted

## ECC18 **ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES GRANT FUNDING UPDATE**

The Climate Change Lead Officer presented the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Funding Update.

She recommended that Members:

- Note the actions that have been taken to date to launch the fund and engage with community groups in Uttlesford, and the timeline for selection of the successful projects
- Note that this enabling activity would support a further plan for district wide engagement on climate action. This engagement would also help inform the development of the Council Climate Change Action Plan, specifically the future programme of work that would be needed to deliver community decarbonisation

The Climate Change Lead Officer said that:

- The grant scheme had approval and had been through ECCWG and Cabinet.
- The Communities Team had provided a significant amount of advice to match the scheme with other community grants previously offered by Uttlesford and other districts
- A successful webinar had been held 15 November 2022, attended by over twenty community groups and parish councils, to talk through the objectives, criteria and actions for applications
- The purpose of the grant was an enabling activity to engage district wide decarbonisation
- The criteria for the grant was set out in three themes: carbon emission reduction, biodiversity restoration and enhancement and community engagement in climate change
- Detailed guidance is available on each theme on the website
- All projects were expected to provide a method and to quantify what they were going to achieve
- A matrix would be created for the panel to evaluate and score the bids based on the selection criteria
- A newsletter had been launched alongside the grant and would enable stories from the projects to be shared
- Additional webinars would be scheduled to enable further sharing and learning
- The application deadline was 5 January 2023. Applications would then be scored, the panel would moderate them to a shortlist, which would go to Cabinet for consideration on 6 February 2023

Members discussed:

- Whether the panel selection should go before the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee
- How the panel should be selected

The update was noted.

## ECC19 **ESSEX JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE STRATEGY**

The Assistant Director of Environmental Services provided a verbal update on the Essex Joint Municipal Waste Strategy.

He said that an additional meeting would be sought in January to provide a detailed waste update.

The update was noted.

## ECC20 **CLIMATE CHANGE EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET UPDATE**

The Climate Change Lead Officer provided a verbal update on the Climate Change and Budget Expenditure.

She said that:

- They planned to take stock and review the action plan and actions for 2023
- There was currently £344,000 committed spend and £150,000 grant funding for 2022/23 and 2023/24
- There were commitments to a couple of transport related consultancy projects
- The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWHIP) was a district wide plan and the value of the contract was between £50k and £70k. The County Council were not offering any additional funding and as the District Council had budgeted £50k, consideration would need to be given to what elements could be removed if necessary

In response to questions from Members the Climate Change Lead Officer said that:

- There was an ongoing transport study for the Local Plan and a number of ongoing consultancy projects
- They were working with the planner and in the new year would bring the projects together to ensure that the recommendations aligned
- The results of the parking study were in, but not yet published and included areas of overlap

The Environmental Health Manager – Protection said that:

- Members could expect a comprehensive range of studies and detailed strategies
- The Local Highways Panel had conducted a feasibility study regarding cycling for Saffron Walden
- The three studies looked at a more robust transport strategy that leads on the work done from the Local Plan which would seek to provide recommendations to improve transportation
- Attention would be paid to ensure that a comprehensive strategy was put in place to hold developers to account to and seek funding and grants and S106. It could be a key document to secure big changes to transportation, and linked with developer contributions, would enable money to be clawed back to contribute to the schemes
- Transport would evolve within the district and the funding could be used for officer time, cycle ways and other matters to encourage active travel

The Climate Change Project lead said that the main matters arising from the Littlebury Decarbonisation Project were:

- Understanding what came into the economic development team
- Next steps and identifying where the most impact can be achieved
- The action in the plan needed further work to ensure that all opportunities to collaborate were achieved

The update was noted.

Councillor Pavitt provided an update following a recent meeting with Anglian Water. He said that:

- He had requested a map for their plans for the whole of Uttlesford to get a proper picture of how the rivers would be updated
- There was mounting evidence that the rivers were alive with superbugs and antibiotic residue
- There were high levels of combined sewerage overflows in many local rivers
- There may be grant funding available to get rid of pollutants before the water goes back into the water table
- He had requested details of opportunities where Anglian Water could create wetlands

*Councillor Smith left the meeting at 8.53pm.*

- He would like to see teams of people in every community keeping an eye on what was happening and reporting data back to Anglian Water
- Dunmow and Thaxted already have established river volunteers in place
- A significant catch up was required as investment in water in Uttlesford did not commence until 2005

*Councillor Pavitt left the meeting at 8.59pm.*

The Chair thanked everyone for their hard work and their attendance at the meeting.

*The meeting closed at 9.02pm*