

## **Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group**

Held at:	Remote meeting
Date	Monday, 13 December 2021
Present	Councillors Gary Fuller, Anthony Hills, Connor McConville* and Lesley Whybrow (Chair)
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Ian Meyers
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Olu Fatokun (Low Carbon Senior Specialist), Katharine Harvey (Chief Economic Development Officer), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist)
Others Present:	None

(\* joined the meeting from minute number 4)

### **1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 were agreed. The Chair's signature will be added electronically.

Prior to moving onto the main agenda items, Councillor Tony Hills, mentioned lamp post EV charging points. KCC had encountered technical issues with proposed installation. Councillor Hills will update members further about this issue.

### **3. UK 100 Membership**

The briefing note provided information on UK100, a network of local authorities who have pledged to take action on climate change.

The Working Group was therefore asked to provide a recommendation to the Leader on whether to join the UK100 network.

The Chair asked members and it was **unanimously agreed that recommendation is given to the Leader to join this network.**

*Councillor Connor McConville joined the meeting.*

#### 4. **Proposed Green Business Grant Scheme**

The report put forward a proposal for a green business grant scheme to support businesses that are located, or seeking to locate in the district, with implementing carbon reduction measures.

Dr Katharine Harvey, Chief Economic Development Officer, presented the report, members commented as follows:

- It was noted the Dover District Council concentrate on small businesses, however as the Folkestone & Hythe district does not contain many large businesses, a limit has not been applied.
- Impact of funding against carbon reduction? Dr Harvey advised this would be considered, ie value for money and carbon reduction criteria.
- Any data availability from Dover District Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council on their grant schemes? Dr Harvey will return to members with further information.

Members thanked Dr Harvey for the report.

It was suggested, and agreed by all members, that the recommendation to Cabinet includes reference to the working group's agreement to this proposal.

#### 5. **District Wide Strategy**

The report outlined the proposed structure for the District-wide Carbon Plan and proposal for consultation in response to the Climate & Ecological Emergency Declaration Resolution; *to develop a strategy for Folkestone & Hythe District Council to play a leadership role in community, public and business partnerships for our Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district.*

Mr Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist, presented the report and pointed out the priority areas consisting of five pillars.

Turning to the four appendices in the report, members were asked to comment,

*Appendix 1 – District Wide Carbon Action Plan – Draft Proposed Structure.*

- Ensure a clear project plan and outcome.
- What effect can the Council have? Ensure close working with KCC to reduce car usage; use of public right of ways (PROWS) as potential cycle paths; community transport.

- Policy updates, for example planning policies, how can these be improved? Design codes, the Council has applied to be part of the Government's pilot scheme, funding may be available.
- Transport – KCC are updating their Local Transport Plan to incorporate green credentials, as a Council we could influence this.
- Ecology and biodiversity references.

*Appendix 2 – District-wide Carbon Plan – Draft Proposed Engagement Strategy.*

Mr Tofts spoke about this proposal and how a steering group of stakeholders would collaborate and discuss the drive to net zero carbon. The suggested name was the 'Carbon Innovation Lab' and the proposal drew on experience of a similar approach at the London Borough of Hounslow, which had proved successful. It would be an informal, self-elected forum which would be chaired by the Council. There may be a need for the group to split into Task & Finish Groups.

Members raised the following points:

- Steering group selection? Details will be looked at, also need to consider the level of interest and who wants to become engaged, ie schools, charities, green industry businesses.
- Frequency? Possibly quarterly with the Council preparing agendas and minutes.
- Numbers? Possibly 20 to 30 attendees with half a dozen taking an active role.
- A suggestion that the Council should support the group, rather than lead it.
- Ensure the report to Cabinet captures the views of the working group.

*Appendix 3 – District Wide Carbon Plan – Proposed Draft Project Plan and Timetable.*

Mr Tofts said this is a high level plan incorporating a formal consultation. Communications are key.

*Appendix 4 – District Wide Carbon Plan – Draft Proposed High Level Actions*

Members considered this a good starting point with the idea to identify where emissions originate from and ask the Steering Group to decide on the actions required.

The Chair asked about the budget, looking at consultation costs, physical staff resources will be needed especially if the Council considers working with schools.

Further actions subsequent to this meeting – redraft strategy taking on board the working group's comments; draw up a list of participants; and present to Cabinet for approval.

6. **Briefing Note on the Government's 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener'**

The report summarised the Government's recently published Net Zero Strategy, 'Build Back Greener', for the Working Group's information. It provided a snapshot to members of the published document.

Members referred to the document as highly aspirational and thanked officers for the briefing.

7. **Update on the Carbon Action Plan**

Ms Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist, gave members a progress report on the Carbon Action Plan, which included:

- Mandatory training now complete for all officers and members.
- Climate impact statement on Cabinet reports – six month trial continues.
- Climate Change Champions – making good progress with new ideas and regular updates.
- New waste bins in the Civic Centre to further ensure efficient waste streams.

Members suggested that a facts and figures update would be useful compared to six months ago, maybe presented as an infographic to show progress and further understanding. Also, a suggestion for possible internal allocated funding to take ideas forward and encourage innovation, which could then be promoted through comms.

8. **Future of the Working Group**

Members' suggestions and comments follow:

- Large amount of hard work undertaken by the working group.
- Suggest continuing regular working group meetings and also six monthly all member briefings.
- Ensure meetings are flexible to ensure regular member attendance or appoint substitutes. Terms of reference will need to be checked with regard to substitutes.
- Climate Change budget – ensure value for money.
- Keep momentum of ideas coming forward to the working group. Councillor Hills suggested; adaptation of changing environment; more resilience and planning; widening of drainage systems on Romney Marsh; working closely with Environment Agency; surface water flooding and flood resistance.

The Chair, Cllr Whybrow referred to a publication entitled 'Natural Solutions to Climate Change in Kent' produced by KCC. Cllr Hills will endeavour to provide a link to this resource to members.

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Cllr Whybrow will also provide links to the Southern Water presentation, held at a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee in November, and the Net Zero Carbon toolkit produced by Cotswold District Council.

All members joined in congratulating Cllr Whybrow on chairing this working group, ensuring cross-party teamwork. Officers were also recognised for their knowledge and hard work.