

Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group

Held at:	Remote Meeting
Date	Thursday, 23 June 2022
Present	Councillors Anthony Hills, Ian Meyers and Lesley Whybrow (Chair)
Officers Present:	Olu Fatokun (Low Carbon Senior Specialist), Robert Palmer (Interim Assistant Director of Corporate Services), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist), Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist) and David Whittington (Strategy & Policy Senior Specialist)
Others Present:	Kirsty Tolson, Senior Flood Risk Consultant, Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2022 were approved, the Chair's signature will be added.

The following matters arising were discussed:

- The Green Infrastructure Strategy was now out to consultation, but the Chair raised concerns about how some actions would be implemented. Feedback was awaited from the Operations Team as to whether an in-house ecologist might be required.
- Part of the motion relating to pesticides requested that a letter be written to the Secretary of State for the Environment. This was being progressed.
- In terms of on-street spraying, KCC contractors were continuing to carry out spraying, which was not in line with what FHDC were doing. The Director of Corporate Services agreed to investigate this matter further.

3. **Initial update on progress with new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)**

David Whittington, Strategy & Policy Senior Specialist, and Kirsty Tolson, Senior Flood Risk Consultant, Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd gave a presentation which set out data in relation to the SFRA.

The Working Group Members commented on various matters and discussion took place on the following:

- Was the long-term climate change projections data meaningful, as it didn't take into account the melting of ice caps?
- There is large uncertainty about the impacts of climate change beyond 100 years' into the future, so it is difficult to predict the impacts on flood risk. However, studies concluded that it was guaranteed that the sea level would continue to rise.
- The risk of flooding from wave overtopping indicated by the SFRA was a concern, as were the sewer flooding hotspots.

Kirsty Tolson responded to some of the matters discussed, and made points including the following:

- There was much uncertainty around the impact of the ice caps melting. It was important to highlight the issues around climate change, but it was difficult to predict the situation in 300 years' time. There were many different scenarios to consider. The SFRA assessed the risk over a 100 year period, adopting a conservative approach, and identifies challenges within the district relating to flood risk.
- Wave overtopping was erratic and there were limitations in terms of modelling, for example, it did not take into account local drainage. The maps showed the worst case scenarios, and were only designed to show where there was potential for flooding and aimed to limit risks.
- Any new developments were subject to a sewage capacity check, and contributions from developers were sought by Southern Water where improvement was needed.
- That the assessment was intended to set the strategic context for planning policy and was not intended to be used to assess any given site directly.

The Working Group thanked Kirsty for her attendance at the meeting.

4. **Update to Council's Carbon footprint 2019/20 & 2020/21**

Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist presented the report which set out figures for the council's carbon footprint in 19/20 and 20/21. She stated that it was important to note that gas and electricity consumption for the sheltered housing remained static over the reporting period 2019/20 and 2020/21. This was due to the fact that the majority of the monitoring period fell within the period when it was East Kent Housing. With the buildings only returning to the direct management of the district council on 1 October 2020, historic consumption data from the suppliers had been used for electricity and gas over this period.

Work is currently underway to improve data collection in relation to the sheltered housing buildings. The Low Carbon & Sustainability Senior Specialist is working with the Case Management Lead officer to explore options to automate the process of collating data on energy use to ensure more accurate reporting in the future. This will minimise the time spent in manually inputting data into existing systems as well as allow for robust data monitoring and trend analysis going forward.

Members commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- The impact of electricity consumption in social housing was significant.
- The stock survey was a lot of work, and there were lots of demands to balance.

Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist, Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist, and Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services made points including the following:

- A lot of work was being done with regard to the impact of social housing. £2 million had been received in government grants towards social housing decarbonisation and work had already started at Ross Way. The government was also about to announce a second wave of funding. There was also a fund available relating to civic buildings. Martin Kerlake, Carbon Advisor, had been doing a lot of work on this issue, and it was suggested that he be invited to attend a future meeting of the Working Group.
- A Strategy on decarbonising housing stock was being developed, and would address some of the issues raised.
- The emission levels set out in the report only addressed sheltered housing.

The Chair advised that discussion would be needed around how to best communicate the findings of the report.

5. Update on Inception Meeting of Carbon Innovation Lab (13 June 2022)

Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist gave a presentation which updated the Working Group on the first meeting of the Carbon Innovation Lab.

The Chair also added that it had been a successful meeting.

6. Update on Carbon Action Plan

Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist highlighted key points from the Carbon Action Plan.

The Chairman asked if there was any update in respect of green energy. The Low Carbon Senior Specialist advised that this issue was tied with the contract, and nothing could be done before 2023.