

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

23 June 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 23 June 2022 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel and D.B. Oliver.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

CCSG22/2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/3. **PROJECTS SUMMARY**

(3)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following was noted within the report:

- 2019/20 Carbon Emissions Accounting Tool: Scope 1 was still outstanding due to lack of fleet mileage information; investigations were ongoing to source and collate this data.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Officers were working with the legal team to progress this project. It was anticipated that the contractor would be appointed by the end of June 2022, with installation completed in at least three car parks by May 2023.
- Electric Community Bus Service: Expected to be progressed once Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding was awarded.
- Solar Litter Bins: Initial report drafted May 2022 highlighting concerns around manufacturing footprint versus any emission reductions.
- Tree Coverage in Bexhill: Trees for Cities were working with East Sussex County Council on an Urban Tree Challenge Fund project focused on roadside verge tree planting; some funding had been secured and additional funding was being applied for. £143,000 had

been secured to increase tree coverage; information on proposed sites was awaited. Work was ongoing with Bexhill Environment Group on tree and hedge planting proposals for 2022-23. Development of a strategic Urban Forest Master Plan would be drafted once the Environment Strategy Officer was in post (role advertised in June 2022).

- Switch to Council Tax E-billing: Implementation was imminent; 'opt-out' option to maximise take-up.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: Use CIL funding and invite all village and community halls to participate in energy audit.
- Green Space Wildlife Areas: Replace seasonal bedding displays with permanent perennial and shrub planting.
- Recycling / Waste: Legislation was still awaited on the introduction of food waste collections and deposit return scheme; until implementation, the target would remain at approximately 50%.
- Local Plan Policies and Heat Pumps: Biodiversity net gain measures incorporated including heat pumps within the emerging Local Plan, expected to be drafted by end of 2022 and adopted in 2024.

It was noted that the development of a website green page and evaluation and reduction of Council staff travel emissions would be progressed by the Green Team. It was also noted that the Pollinator and Pesticide Policy and Green Asset Management Plan had both been deferred until devolvement of assets / services to parish and town councils had been completed.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- the Completed Projects Summary would be translated onto the website green page, when developed, to inform residents of actions taken since the declaration of a Climate Emergency; and
- the Green Team had met for the first time in June 2022, with a further meeting scheduled for July 2022.

CCSG22/4. VILLAGE HALLS PROJECT UPDATE

(4)

The Village Hall Energy Project aimed to reduce the carbon footprints of village and community halls across the district by reducing reliance on oil and gas as a fuel source, and decreasing electricity drawn from the national grid by 2025. The report identified the aims, measurements, key stakeholders, external specialisms, proposed milestones and funding requirements for the project. As of June 2022, 43 halls had been identified as in scope for the project. 26 had confirmed that they would like to participate (one declined), confirmation from the remaining 16 was still awaited. It was anticipated that the final take-up would be high.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- once funding had been allocated by the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy Allocations Panel, site assessments would take place during August to December 2022;

- a review of site assessments, agreement of prioritisation criteria and confirmation of the schedule of installations at relevant sites would take place between December 2022 and March 2023; and
- ideas for the prioritisation criteria would be discussed at the next meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group.

ACTION 1: Ideas for the prioritisation criteria to be discussed at the next meeting. **(BH/EM)**

CCSG22/5. **2019/20 CARBON BASELINING**
(5)

The Council had undertaken a baselining exercise based on Green House Gas (GHG) emissions for the year April 2019 to March 2020, using a GHG accounting tool developed specifically for local authorities. The tool categorised emissions into three distinct scopes:

- **Scope 1:** Emissions released as a direct result of organisational activity.
- **Scope 2:** Emissions released as an indirect consumption of an energy commodity.
- **Scope 3:** All other indirect emissions other than electricity, as well as emissions from operations that had been outsourced.

Regarding the baseline for 2019/20, Members were advised that Scope 1 emissions related to fleet vehicles and data was still being sought; Scope 2 grid electricity purchased in the Council's operations; and Scope 3 would not be included. As data for Scopes 1 and 2 was unlikely to be available, it was considered appropriate to reset a base year for Scope 3 at a more recent point, to ensure that all reliable data was accessible. A boundary setting exercise had been instigated to identify Scope 3 emission sources including current or potential reporting measures, to confirm how and when they would be incorporated into the GHG accounting tool. It was noted that due to complexities and wide scale variations it was difficult to measure comparisons with other similar sized local authorities.

Members were advised that Scope 3 emissions could typically be 60-80% of an organisation's total carbon footprint. Therefore, the Council's actual carbon emissions for 2019/20 could be in the region of 700 tonnes (equivalent of driving a diesel car 170 times round the Earth and equivalent of 35,000 trees growing for one year to offset).

During the discussion the following points were noted.

- estimated fleet mileage emissions had been received, calculated from mileage recorded from MOT certificates and would be circulated to Members in due course. Figures indicated fleet mileage emissions of 9.55 tonnes, taking the baseline figure to 213.88 tonnes for the year 2019/2020;
- mileage from the Council's main vehicles totalled approximately 30,000. If the vehicles were replaced with electric vehicles (EV), emissions would be reduced by 73% from 9.55 tonnes to 2.6 tonnes.

Fuel costs would be reduced by two thirds from £10,000 to £3,500 for EVs;

- emissions from heating for the year 2019/2020 were calculated across five sites owned by the Council at the time, but the number of sites had now increased to 12. Therefore, the amount of emissions would increase as the number of sites had increased in the Council's portfolio;
- all Council vehicles were leased and not owned;
- vehicles used by contractors fell into Scope 3. Mileage figures for this group could not be backdated to 2019;
- 'grey fleet' vehicles fell within Scope 3 and emitted 73 tonnes for the year 2019/20;
- Biffa had been trialling hydrotreated vegetable oil as fuel for their vehicles in the Wealden area;
- mileage for Council owned vehicles had not changed greatly since 2019, as officers had still been mobile during the pandemic;
- the Council had not committed to EVs for their vans yet and were awaiting costs from the lease provider. The 4x4 coastal vehicle had been replaced with a diesel vehicle due to no EV points in the Camber area;
- baseline figures would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July; and
- emissions from the Town Hall in 2019/20 totalled 71.16 tonnes, which was the equivalent of 50 households, accounting for one third of the Council's total emissions. Locally generated electricity was featured in the proposed re-design of the Town Hall.

ACTION 2: The Project Officer to circulate fleet mileage emission figures to Members. **(EM)**

CCSG22/6. **COMMUNICATIONS / RECRUITMENT UPDATE**

(6)

The Director – Place and Climate Change provided an update on recruitment and confirmed that an advert for a Strategy and Partnership role was due to close at the end of the week, with interviews scheduled to take place over the coming weeks. It was hoped that details of the new appointment could be given at the next meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group. The post would initially report to the Director – Place and Climate Change but would in time move to report to the Planning Policy Manager.

CCSG22/7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(7)

The following any other business item was discussed:

- Councillor Coleman requested information on availability of funding for tree planting along Sidley High Street. East Sussex County Council would be contacted in the first instance as the pavement belonged to the Highways Team - Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and Councillor Nick Bennett, the Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change.

CCSG22/8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(8)

The date of the next informal meeting was arranged for Tuesday 26 July 2022 at 11:30am and to be held remotely on MS Teams. This meeting would not be webcast.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:37pm

CCSG220623jh/lh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

26 July 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Tuesday 26 July 2022 at 11:31am.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands (in part), P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, C.A. Madeley, H.L. Timpe (in part) and J. Vine-Hall.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/10. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 23 JUNE 2022 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 23 June 2022 were agreed.

There were no matters arising.

CCSG22/12. SCOPE 1 AND 2 EMISSIONS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS AND SCOPE 3 REPORTING

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) gave Members a presentation on the Scope 1 and 2 emissions over the past three years (2019/20 – 2021/22) and an update on the Scope 3 reporting.

Members were reminded that Scope 1 emissions (released as a direct result of organisational activity) included heating, fleet and Scope 2 (released as an indirect consumption of an energy commodity) electricity. Scope 3 (other indirect emissions as well as emissions from operations that had been outsourced) included water, business mileage, working from home, material use, organisational waste and outsourced services such as the joint waste contract and leisure centres. Scope 3 emissions were more difficult to measure and monitor.

Over the three-year period, heating emissions from the Town Hall and direct operational buildings had stayed constant, but the total emissions from temporary accommodation (TA) had increased due to the acquisition of more properties. Consideration would be given to how newly acquired properties could be decarbonised and for decarbonisation requirements to be built into the leases of other Council-owned properties. The Town Hall had the greatest heating emissions, but it was anticipated that this would reduce by 50% if the Town Hall Renaissance Project went ahead.

The Council's fleet vehicles accounted for 4.02% of total emissions, which could be reduced by 70% if they were switched to e-vehicles. This was not feasible at the current time due to a lack of charging points across the district but would be re-visited in 2026/27 when the fleet was due to be renewed.

Electricity emissions from the Council's direct operational buildings had decreased due to the change in working practices during and following the pandemic, but indirect operational buildings, public toilets, TA and business leased buildings' emissions had bounced back after decreasing during the pandemic.

The Council had recently procured a 'green' electricity contract. Government guidance offered two different ways for public sector bodies to report the emissions from the electricity they procure, using either a 'location-based' or 'market-based' approach. The location-based approach used the average carbon emission intensity of the national grid. Using this method meant that buying green electricity was not 'counted' towards meeting a carbon reduction target. The market-based approach involved using an emissions factor that was specific to the electricity supply that was purchased. Using this approach meant that, when green electricity was procured in line with the Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin scheme, it could be counted towards meeting a carbon-reduction target. If this approach was used then, to avoid double counting, it reduced the amount of green electricity that was available to others through the national grid. In other words, the Council's electricity supply may have been green but the supply to all other customers will be a little less green. As the Council's aim was for Net Zero across the district of Rother, it was suggested that the location-based approach should be adopted.

The Council was currently on track to achieving the carbon neutral target by 2030 with regards to Scope 1 and 2 emissions, but this had been largely due to the pandemic and agile working practices. The Town Hall Renaissance Project, switching fleet vehicles to e-vehicles and the planned devolvement of public toilets would decrease emissions some more, but further work was required to achieve the target by 2030. The Wildlife Trust were working on an action plan to assist the Council.

Work to reduce Scope 3 emissions was under consideration, but further data was required. The joint waste contract accounted for very high levels of emissions and a decarbonisation project to look at the types of vehicles used, route optimisations and the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel by a Working Group was to be taken forward.

CCSG22/13. VILLAGE HALLS PROJECT – PRIORITISATION CRITERIA

(5)

The Village Hall Energy Project aimed to reduce the carbon footprints of village and community halls across the district by reducing reliance on oil and gas as a fuel source, and decreasing electricity drawn from the national grid by 2025.

The application for Community Infrastructure Levy funding had been successful and site assessments would take place during August to December 2022 to determine which halls would be awarded funding. The criteria to be used by contractors carrying out the site visits to determine awards were:

- cost of each measure proposed and the payback to be received by the hall;
- regularity of hall bookings;
- Rest Centre status; and
- higher weighting to those halls currently using oil.

The village halls would be asked to provide 12 months' energy statements, plus pre-pandemic statements. The assessments would be based on a whole-building approach to decarbonisation.

CCSG22/14. COMMUNICATIONS / RECRUITMENT UPDATE

(6)

The Director – Place and Climate Change provided an update on recruitment and confirmed that an offer had been made and accepted for the Strategy and Partnership Officer role. The applicant, currently employed by the Kent Wildlife Trust, would commence employment in the autumn.

CCSG22/15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(7)

The following any other business item was discussed:

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects since the last meeting. The village halls project had seen the greatest progress and the Green Team were continuing to develop the website green page with good news stories. The Council becoming a member of UK100 was also under discussion. A project update would appear as a separate agenda item at the next meeting.

CCSG22/16. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(8)

The date of the next informal meeting was arranged for Wednesday 31 August 2022 at 10:00am, to be held remotely on MS Teams. This meeting would not be webcast.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 12:57pm

CCSG220726lh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

31 August 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Wednesday 31 August 2022 at 10:02am.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel and J. Vine-Hall.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/18. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/19. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 26 JULY 2022 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

There were no matters arising.

CCSG22/20. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(3)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following was noted within the report:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: In August a Sustrans Active Steps cycling programme had been launched – to date six Council staff had joined. A cycle to work scheme was scheduled to be re-launched. Team Charters were being produced and a Manager’s Forum scheduled to be held in September to discuss the environmental impact of commuting staff etc.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Installation to be completed in at least three car parks by May 2023.
- Electric Community Bus Service: Awaiting confirmation of Round 2 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

- Tree Coverage in Bexhill: Trees for Cities were working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) on an Urban Tree Challenge Fund project focused on roadside verge tree planting; several locations had been identified within Bexhill and planting was scheduled to start winter 2022-23. Additional funding was being sourced. £143,000 had been secured to increase tree coverage; three sites had been shortlisted (Bexhill Downs, Sidley Recreation Ground and Southlands Open Space) with an additional three back-up sites if required. Planting was scheduled to commence in winter 2022-23. Work was ongoing with Bexhill Environment Group on tree and hedge planting proposals for 2022-23. The Bexhill i-Tree Eco Study commenced in February 2022 – the full report was detailed at Agenda Item 6.
- Roll out of “One Digital”: Switch to Council Tax E-billing; Implementation was imminent; ‘opt-out’ option would maximise take-up. Members would be briefed in October 2022.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: CIL funding was awarded in July 2022 – report was being presented to Cabinet on 5 September 2022.
- Local Plan (include biodiversity net gain measures): Public consultation on the new plan would commence in early 2023; parish and town councils (P&TC) would be consulted in autumn 2022.
- Green Space Wildlife Areas: Replace seasonal bedding displays with permanent perennial and shrub planting; scheduled to commence at Manor Barn Gardens and along East Parade in Bexhill.
- Solar Power/Panels: To be progressed as part of the Town Hall Renaissance Project. A memorandum of co-operation was being drafted between the Council and Energise Sussex Coast.
- Air Quality Monitors: To be discussed / progressed with Environmental Services.
- Recycling / Waste / Supply Composters: Legislation was still awaited on the introduction of food waste collections and deposit return scheme; until implementation, the target would remain at approximately 50%. From August 2022, the Council’s website detailed links to composting resources, including East Sussex County Council guidance.
- P&TC adopt Climate Emergency Policies: Hurst Green Parish Council had declared a climate emergency in July 2022. A framework template to be established.
- Heat Pumps: A pan-East Sussex approach to decarbonise housing was being considered.
- Re-use Nappy Scheme: Council support to be given to a local charity to implement.

It was also noted that the Pollinator and Pesticide Policy, Green Asset Management Plan and Carbon Neutral Council assets had been deferred until devolvement of assets / services to P&TCs had been completed. Two projects were not being progressed, namely solar litter bins and outdoor gym projects. Members were advised that investigating solar litter bins and technology involved etc. to reduce waste service emissions would duplicate the work of the Joint Waste Partnership Decarbonisation Project. Additional solar bins might be installed for the purpose of reducing litter and would be managed by Neighbourhood Services. The current gym equipment was still fit-for-purpose and electricity generating equipment only generated enough

power to charge personal devices or lighting within the immediate vicinity. The Council's current outdoor gym areas did not have any lighting.

The following projects had been introduced, established and completed: Council Green Team; 100% renewable energy contracts adopted; joined UK Green Building Council; waterless urinals; eco-tips on 'MyAlerts'; four community projects supplied with superfast broadband; delivered free environmental and sustainability workshops; carbon literacy training for Members and officers; wildflower areas; CIL Climate Emergency Bonus Fund; tree coverage in Bexhill; carbon reduction clauses in all contracts; swap shop for office moves; virtual mailroom; maintenance tracker; paperless pledge and digital image processing; staff digital suggestions box; working from home and on-line meetings; solar panels on Council-owned properties; Environment Strategy; and climate emergency established.

During the discussion the following points were suggested and noted:

- a Members allowance scheme for shared travelling to meetings held at the Town Hall;
- as a result of the current national energy crisis, it was anticipated that staff returning to work at the Town Hall would significantly increase over the winter period;
- offer incentives to staff who cycle to work;
- the Council to pay for season tickets to encourage staff to travel to work by public transport etc.;
- lobby British Rail and businesses to conserve energy and switch off lighting at night; to liaise with ESCC;
- currently in consultation with Energise Sussex Coast to establish community energy micro grids (Egerton Park / Polegrove) etc.;
- currently working with neighbouring authorities regarding drop-in co-working flexible spaces; and
- energy efficient products would and were being used to refurbish Council-owned properties, where appropriate.

CCSG22/21. GREEN TEAM – UPDATE

(5)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated Members on the work of the Council's Green Team. The Green Team consisted of officers across all departments of the authority. The following projects were being prioritised / considered:

- establish a staff survey to ascertain current travel arrangements and mileage including investigating car pool/sharing and electric vehicles;
- to implement a structured recycling system at the Town Hall with the co-operation of the cleaning staff;
- establishment of the green page on the Council's website; and
- implementation (next year) of the one-digital system for Council Tax billing (reduction of paper bills), opt-in or opt-out still to be decided. Important that all methods of payment were available, particularly for those residents who were not able to access technology. Members would be fully briefed in the autumn.

CCSG22/22. I-TREE ECO SAMPLE SURVEY OF BEXHILL'S URBAN FOREST
(6)

Consideration was given to the Urban Forest 1066 (Assessing the importance and value of trees) document which had recently been published. The document was an i-tree eco sample survey of Bexhill's urban forest and was collaborated in consultation with the Council, Tree-economics, i-Tree and Forest Research. Provided baseline information which could be used to inform future decision making and strategy. A team of volunteers collated field data from 300 plots across Bexhill. The following key points were noted:

- Bexhill had approximately 228,000 trees.
- Tree 16% and Shrub 6% approximate coverage – covering an area of over 750 hectares.
- 81 different species (Oak [dominant], Ash and Holly).
- Future planting to focus on different species to improve overall resilience.
- Good distribution of semi-mature trees, less large senescent trees; further planting to be undertaken to support ageing population.
- Potential to trap and remove 53 tonnes of air pollution annual / value of £1.5m.
- Reduce surface runoff by over 84,000m³ per year (equivalent of 34 Olympic swimming pools), worth estimated £152,000 in avoided treatment costs.
- Store 73,000 tonnes of carbon and sequester an additional 2,000 tonnes of carbon annually with associated values of approximately £66.6m and £2m respectively.
- Benefits to habitat, soil conversation and noise reduction.

During the discuss the following was noted:

- it was suggested that the Council managed a “donate and name” the tree service, including a plaque;
- a further 2,000 trees were scheduled to be planted at Bexhill Down in November 2022;
- improve tree-lining streets / plant more trees in the verges; East Sussex County Council support and approval would be required;
- encourage residents to plant more trees within their gardens; and
- important that a variety of species were planted.

CCSG22/23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

Communications: it was suggested that a weekly good news story be released to advertise what progress had been made to reduce the District's carbon footprint.

Local Plan: it was requested that the Climate Change Steering Group had input and were provided with a briefing on the development of the new Local Plan. The Director – Place and Climate Change agreed to

Speak to the Planning Policy Manager and a briefing would be organised before the end of the year.

ACTION 1: The Director – Place and Climate Change to speak to the Planning Policy Manager and organise a briefing before the end of the year for the Climate Change Steering Group on the development of the Local Plan.

CCSG22/24. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(8)

The Director – Place and Climate Change to agree dates for the next six months with the Chair. Members would be advised of the dates agreed.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 11:12am

CCSG220831jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

18 October 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Tuesday 18 October 2022 at 11:00am.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, P.C. Courtel and G.F. Stevens.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Project Officer (Environment), Environment Strategy Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.J. Coleman and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

CCSG22/26. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Langlands Agenda Item 4 – Personal Interest as a Director of Bexhill Community Bus Service and Trustee of Community Supporters.

CCSG22/27. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 31 AUGUST 2022 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

It was requested that the Minutes of the previous “informal” meetings be uploaded and made available on the public facing section of the website. After review by the Director – Place and Climate Change, it was agreed to upload the Minutes to the website.

Members requested that carbon measurement savings be added to the Project Summary Update report and recorded in future minutes of the meetings. The Project Officer (Environment) agreed that, where appropriate, measurements would be included within future reports.

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) sought clarity on when the next meeting would be held in the public domain. The Director – Place and Climate Change would discuss with his team and devise a suitable agenda. The CCSG would be advised of the agreed date.

The CCSG was advised that an annual summary page would be uploaded to the website to highlight headline details of the projects that the Council and community had undertaken over the year; this was scheduled to be launched shortly. Members were shown a draft version of the page. Progress on projects could also be advertised on the Council's social media platforms, as well as 'MyAlerts'.

ACTION 1: Director – Place and Climate Change to review all previous “informal” meeting minutes prior to being uploaded to the website.

ACTION 2: Carbon measurement savings be included on future reports and Minutes. (Project Officer [Environment] / Democratic Services Officer).

ACTION 3: Director – Place and Climate Change to agree the date and agenda of the next Climate Change Steering Group “public” meeting.

ACTION 4: Progress on projects be advertised on the Council's social media platforms, as well as 'MyAlerts'. (Project Officer [Environment]).

CCSG22/28. **RECRUITMENT UPDATE (VERBAL)**

(6)

The Chair, in agreement with the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG), re-ordered the agenda to consider Agenda Item 6 next.

The Director – Place and Climate Change introduced Dr Lucie Bolton, Environment Strategy Officer, to the CCSG who had recently joined the Council. She would be responsible for and leading on rewriting the Council's existing Environment Strategy to ensure that it was fit-for-purpose, including carbon changes across the Council and whole of the district.

CCSG22/29. **PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE**

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following was noted within the report:

- Green Page on the Council's website: From 10 October 2022, the Climate Emergency webpage had been redesigned and linked to all relevant pages that contributed towards the Council's Environment Strategy. Additional pages on emissions, annual achievements and guidance were being developed.
- Council Staff Travel Emissions: On 11 October 2022, Sustrans Active Steps cycling programme was completed. A cycle to work scheme was scheduled to be re-launched shortly. Team Charters were being produced and a Managers' Forum established to discuss the environmental impact of commuting staff etc. A staff survey would be used to measure baseline commuting emissions.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Feasibility studies were progressing on three car parks, namely De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP), Bedford Place (Rye) and Mount Street (Battle). Once these studies were completed, funding would be

sought. It was anticipated that all three car parks would be EV ready by the end of the year or early 2023.

- Tree Coverage in Bexhill (Street Tree Project): Trees for Cities were working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) on roadside verge tree planting at approximately 31 sites in Bexhill. Planting was scheduled to start winter 2022-23 and additional funding was being sourced to ensure all sites were planted. Scanning of locations for confirmed viability would commence on 30 October 2022 with planting soon afterwards.
- Tree Coverage in Bexhill (Green Recovery Challenge): £143,000 had been secured to increase tree coverage; three sites had been shortlisted (Bexhill Downs, Sidley Recreation Ground and Southlands Open Space) with an additional three back-up sites if required. Planting was scheduled to commence in winter 2022-23.
- Tree Coverage in Bexhill (Bexhill Environment Group): Work was ongoing with Bexhill Environment Group on tree and hedge planting proposals for 2022-23. A further 2,000 trees were scheduled to be planted at Bexhill Downs on Friday 2 December 2022; volunteers were required and Members were asked to promote the scheme within their Wards.
- Roll out of “One Digital”: Switch to Council Tax E-billing; Implementation was imminent; discussion was still on-going regarding an ‘opt-in’ or ‘opt-out’ option. Members would be briefed prior to the system being launched.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: Full Council approval was granted on 19 September 2022. Phase 1 would commence once legal sign-off had been received and completion was anticipated in March 2023.
- Local Plan (including biodiversity net gain measures): Public consultation on the new plan would commence in early 2023; parish and town councils (P&TC) would be consulted in autumn 2022.
- Green Space Wildlife Areas: Replace seasonal bedding displays with permanent perennial and shrub planting; scheduled to commence at Bexhill Cemetery Garden of Remembrance, Polegrove Bowls Club, DLWP Car Park, East Parade and Lanes Gardens.
- Recycling / Supply Composters: Legislation was still awaited (anticipated spring 2023) on the introduction of food waste collections and deposit return scheme; until implementation, the target would remain at approximately 50%. From August 2022, the Council’s website detailed links to composting resources, including ESCC guidance.
- P&TC adopt Climate Emergency Policies: Hurst Green Parish Council had declared a climate emergency in July 2022. A framework template was to be established in collaboration with the Project Officer (Environment). Bexhill Town Council (BTC) had declared a climate and nature emergency in June 2021 and in October 2022 drafted a Climate Action Plan (CAP).
- Air Quality Monitors: Discussions were being held with the Council’s Environmental Services team regarding air quality measures in Rother. Members were advised that the Council was consistently meeting Government Air Quality targets. Investigations would be undertaken to deploy portable units across the district to measure specific “hotspot” areas. Primary school locations were suggested, as it was understood that parents were reluctant to walk their children

to school due to unacceptable air quality. Officers agreed to consider this.

- Solar Panels: A memorandum of co-operation was being drafted with Energise East Sussex. The Council would be participating in ESCC's Solar Together Scheme scheduled to be launched in February 2023; this would be publicised to all residents nearer the time.
- Heat Pumps: East Sussex Housing Group had formed a Climate Sub-group to discuss joint bids for retro-fitting grant applications for housing stock. The Environment Strategy Officer would be leading and liaising with the housing providers on this project.
- Re-use Nappy Scheme: Council support to be given to a local charity to implement.
- De-carbonise Waste Fleet: Agreement had been reached with the contractor (Biffa) to switch the vehicle fleet to hydro-treated vegetable oil instead of diesel; work would commence and a report would be presented to the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee in January 2023.

The CCSG was advised that a bid of £750,000 had been submitted for the Town Hall De-carbonisation project; outcome was expected by January 2023. It was noted that if successful, the Council would require an additional £200,000 to complete the project. Members were advised that BTC's CAP included the procurement of an electric bus for lease to the Bexhill Community Bus Service. It was confirmed that the Council would collaborate / communicate with all relevant stakeholders including P&TCs to ensure that projects were not duplicated. It was confirmed that the Repair Swap Shop / Café project would be rolled-out to P&TCs and local community groups.

Since the last meeting, the following projects had been introduced, established and completed: reducing Council staff travel emissions; reduce, re-use and recycle grants scheme; and village halls energy project.

During the discussion the following points were suggested and noted:

- Members were reminded that the Council's Community Grant Scheme made provision for up to £130,000 per annum and supported the development of community facilities, community activities and sustainable local action projects from P&TCs, voluntary or community organisations. Concern was raised that the process for applying for a grant was too complicated (volumes of paperwork to be completed) and it was requested that the process be simplified;
- Lewes Community Transport had set-up a successful 'Dial-a-Ride' service in Hastings;
- it was understood that only improvements to the 98/99 service (e.g. extend hours) within the district would be included within ESCC's £20m bus service improvement plan;
- Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy funding could be applied for and used to support community bus services, as long as the project met the funding criteria;
- Members were advised that the Project Officer (Environment) and Environment Strategy Officer would be arranging a visit to Veolia's Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility;

- Members were advised of the Local Government Association's free webinar on Neighbourhood Approach to Decarbonising Buildings and Transport scheduled to be held on Tuesday 15 November 2022 at 10:30am [Local Government Association](#). Information on the webinar would be published in October's edition of the Members' Bulletin;
- it was hoped that all Council-owned properties would be retro-fitted with energy efficient products; and
- it was understood that energy and carbon performance of older houses could be improved. However, it was important that the correct energy efficient measures were implemented to improve efficiency and reduce the risk of harm.

ACTION 5: Members promote the request for volunteers within their Wards regarding the Bexhill Downs tree planting scheme scheduled to be held on Friday 2 December 2022.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Langlands declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Director of Bexhill Community Bus Service and Trustee of Community Supporters and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

CCSG22/30. **SPRINT TO NET ZERO**

(5)

Consideration was given to the report of the Project Officer (Environment) on the Council's participation in Every One Of Us Community Interest Company's Couch to Carbon Zero: The 10 Day Sprint for Busy People, scheduled to commence on 7 November 2022 to 18 November 2022, which was in-line with COP27.

The report detailed what the project entailed for the Council, its staff and the district, as well as the Delivery Plan. All participants would be encouraged to make lifestyle changes and it was anticipated that after 10 days, they would have tangibly reduced their carbon footprint. Topics included reviewing / switching bank account providers; technology; and clothing providers. One week prior to the launch, staff would have the opportunity to attend a webinar presentation. Promotional materials, including survey information would also be provided. The project would be promoted district-wide on the Council's social media platforms and through 'MyAlerts' and 'MyBusinessAlerts' to invite residents and businesses to participate. To incentivise participation, monetary prizes would be awarded.

Members were advised that the cost of the project would be £3,250 (50% reduction on the usual price) and that the Council was the first local authority to sign-up.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- prize voucher for a meal at Tillingham Restaurant, Peasmarsh [Tillingham Home](#); and
- promote the scheme to all local environmental organisations and schools.

After deliberation, Members were supportive of the Council participating in the project. It was noted that the Director – Place and Climate Change had already approved the Council’s participation, as it was thought that Members would not be opposed to the scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Council’s participation in the Couch to Carbon Zero: The 10 Day Sprint for Busy People be noted.

ACTION 6: The scheme be promoted to local environmental organisations and schools. (Project Officer (Environment) / Environment Strategy Officer)

CCSG22/31. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

Local Engagement: To ask Members and the public to submit their favourite ‘eco tips’ via ‘MyAlerts’; these would be uploaded to the Council’s website.

Queen’s Canopy Memorial / Team East Sussex: register to plant a tree – details would be emailed to Members.

Wildflower Planting: Concern was raised that wildflower planting in Bexhill had led to a rat infestation. The Neighbourhood Services team had investigated the issue and replacement shrubs were being considered.

Local Plan (Solar Panels): it was noted that solar panels could not be installed on buildings that were within the curtilage of a listed building. Members requested that consideration of this be explored through the development of the new Local Plan. The Director – Place and Climate Change agreed to speak to the Planning Policy Manager.

ACTION 7: Email information on the Queen’s Canopy Memorial. (Director – Place and Climate Change).

ACTION 8: The Director – Place and Climate Change to speak to the Planning Policy Manager regarding solar panels within the curtilage of listed buildings as part of the development of the Local Plan.

CCSG22/32. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

(8)

The date of the next “informal” meeting was arranged for Thursday 24 November 2022 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 12:10pm

CCSG221018jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

24 November 2022

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 24 November 2022 at 2:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, B.J. Drayson (in part), G.F. Stevens and J. Vine-Hall.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Environment Strategy Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

An apology for absence was received from Elize Manning, Project Officer (Environment).

CCSG22/34. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/35. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 18 OCTOBER 2022 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

The following matter arising was discussed:

ACTION 1: Uploading Minutes to the Website. It was clarified that once the Director – Place and Climate Change had reviewed all “informal” meeting minutes they would be uploaded to the Climate Change pages on the Website. They would also be added as an Appendix to the next formal meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group.

CCSG22/36. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(4)

The Environment Strategy Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project/objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: It was clarified that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had shared their recent staff survey

information; lessons had been learnt. The survey was scheduled to be launched to staff shortly.

- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Feasibility studies had been completed in nine car parks, all were potentially viable. The Provider advised that larger bids were considered more favourably, therefore the Council would be applying to install EV charging points within all nine car parks. Funding and approval would be submitted and sought.
- Electric Community Bus Service: Once Bexhill Town Council's Environment Strategy had been finalised, work would resume on this project.
- Tree Coverage in Bexhill (I-Tree Survey): Tree Planting Strategy had been drafted by Treeconomics and circulated to stakeholders for comment and was being considered elsewhere on the Agenda (Item 6). It was anticipated that the final draft would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in early 2023.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: It was anticipated that the Provider would be appointed by Christmas and meetings would proceed in January 2023.
- Recycling: Members were advised that in November 2022, officers had visited the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility and Woodlands In-Vessel Composting Facility at Whitesmith.
- Parish and Town Councils adopt Climate Emergency Policies: This was being considered elsewhere on the Agenda (Item 5).
- Solar Panels: Due to the closure of Rye Swimming Pool, the Council would be supporting Freedom Leisure and ESCC to review solar options.
- Re-use Nappy Scheme: On 4 November 2022, the Environment Strategy Officer met with "Be The Change", a local cloth nappy initiative to discuss promoting re-usable nappies. Unfortunately, "Be The Change" was not a registered charity, which limited funding opportunities.

The Green Page on the Council Website would be removed from the list of projects as this had been created and was ongoing. Two projects were not being progressed, namely air quality measurement kit for cyclists and installation of air quality monitors throughout the district. It was confirmed that enough air quality measurement data already existed and was being captured, plus mobile units might not deliver accurate information. Members were also advised that Sussex Air was investigating a real time quality monitoring system for Sussex via a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs grant.

The report detailed that approximately 30 projects had been completed; this included the Couch to Carbon Zero Sprint which had recently taken place involving Council officers (80), residents and businesses throughout the district (228).

The following link on the Council's website [Our Climate Action April 2021 – March 2022 – Rother District Council](#) detailed a summary of the Council's progress, which highlighted some of the actions taken each year to address the Climate Emergency.

During the discussion the following points were suggested and noted:

- Rye Swimming Pool (RSP): It was suggested that a Community Energy Project was established for RSP. The Director – Place and Climate Change advised that several “energy saving” options were being explored to improve the building’s efficiency and to maximise financial gain. Advice was being sought from Energise Sussex Coast, as additional power sources would be required. A report would be presented to Cabinet in the future. Members were advised that Community Infrastructure Levy funding was being considered to upgrade RSP’s heating equipment / system. It was essential to ensure long-term viability and that RSP re-opened and remained open to the public.
- EV Charging Points: The CCSG sought clarity on the proposed locations / car parks of the EV charging points; exact information was not available at the meeting and would be emailed to Members afterwards. It was clarified that ESCC was responsible for on-street EV Charging Points.

ACTION 2: Project Officer (Environment) to email EV Charging Point information to Members.

CCSG22/37. **NET ZERO – PARISH & TOWN COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT** (5)

Consideration was given to how the Council could support the parish and town councils (P&TC) regarding net zero opportunities. The Environment Strategy Officer advised that she had emailed all P&TC Clerks introducing herself and enquiring about the level of support they would be interested in receiving. The Environment Strategy Officer has compiled some resource information, outlining some clear ideas about what they could do, as well as some useful YouTube links which she would disseminate if required. To date she had received no response.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- It was suggested that the Environment Strategy Officer attend the next RALC meeting and promote information through the Parish Assemblies.
- Funding opportunities might be available from the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, particularly regarding hedgerow and tree planting.
- Councillor Langlands reminded Members of the “Hero to Zero Award” that she had launched in Bexhill. It was important that as well as P&TCs all community groups and schools were encouraged to reduce their carbon emissions / improve their carbon footprint.
- Councillor Mrs Cook advised that Battle Town Council had launched an Eco-Youth Award in Battle.
- Couch to Carbon Zero: Members sought clarity on whether this initiative would be repeated. The Director – Place and Climate Change advised that there were costs involved, however the Council would like to do it again with the focus more on residents. The company regularly launched “sprints” and anyone could sign-up if they wished [Couch to Carbon Zero](#).
- It was important that all community groups, stakeholders, P&TCs were engaged in the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by

2030. Expert advice should be sought where appropriate and local community groups notified of relevant projects. A robust Communications Plan would be essential.

- Realistic targets should be set as ambitious / unrealistic goals were less likely to be achieved which could result in disappointment and decreased effort.

CCSG22/38. **BEXHILL TREE PLANTING STRATEGY – DRAFT**

(6)

Consideration was given to the draft Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy (BTPS). The BTPS detailed the Council's plans in collaboration with Treeconomics, i-Tree and Forest Research to increase the tree canopy across Bexhill, by providing a baseline for the existing urban forest, while strategically exploring opportunities for future planting. The BTPS signposted best practice and guidance regarding planting, care and management of new trees. It detailed information on the urban forest; policy; existing trees and woodland; planting; and monitoring and review.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- It was clarified that different tree species generated different carbon rates. It was important that a variety of species were planted to ensure maximum biodiversity as well as carbon capture.
- Concern was raised regarding the condition and management of Sidley Wood (SW), near Sidley Recreation Ground that was Council-owned land. Coppicing was required; many trees had fallen over stopping other vegetation / plants from growing / flourishing. The Director – Place and Climate Changed advised that officers were aware of the condition of SW.
- Sidley High Street / Tree Planting: it was clarified that roadside tree planting was the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.
- Large-scale tree planting might not benefit the environment and could reduce biodiversity with very little impact on carbon emissions. It was considered important that large-scale planting was not carried out within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (HWAONB). It was recommended that advice be sought from the HWAONB Unit.
- Members were reminded that approximately 2,000 trees were being planted on Bexhill Downs on Friday 2 December 2022; volunteers were still required. St. Stephens Church would be providing refreshments / toilet facilities. Several Council officers would also be attending / volunteering.
- Members agreed that it was important the Council established and implemented a Tree Planting Strategy Plan for the district.

The final draft would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting and the project progressed in the next financial year.

ACTION 3: To establish and implement a Tree Strategy and Action Plan for the District. (Environment Strategy Officer).

CCSG22/39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

Important to incentivise businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, by supporting relevant award schemes e.g. Green Business Awards or Sussex Business Awards. A suggestion was proposed that a Ward by Ward scheme be established and that stickers be presented to those businesses who had adopted environmentally friendly schemes / ways of working. It was thought that this could be difficult to judge, as the subject was so diverse.

It was suggested that a directory of businesses who had already or were taking action to reduce their carbon footprints be developed and advertised on the Council's website. It was important that the Council developed a signposting role and that a robust Communications Plan was developed. A series of stakeholder workshops could be delivered.

Councillor Langlands reminded Members of the "[Bexhill Unwrapped](#)" initiative that had been launched; a website where businesses could sign-up to pledge to use less carbon and be more environmentally friendly. Opportunity for businesses to share ideas. Important to incentivise businesses that are currently not doing anything to reduce their carbon footprint.

A key part of the Environment Strategy (ES) would be how the Council incentivised and integrated ideas to / with the community.

The farming community should be supported as part of the ES, and that they be made aware of any relevant funding sources. It was suggested that advice be sought from East Sussex County Council's, Ecologist (Kate Cole).

It was requested that a report on "carbon banking" be presented at a future meeting.

Councillor Langlands advised that an upcycling clothing project was being developed with Bexhill College, Chantry Community Primary School, British Legion (women section) and the Rotary Club of Bexhill. A fashion show would be held at the De La Warr Pavilion in May 2023.

ACTION 4: To present a report on "carbon banking" at a future meeting. (Environment Strategy Officer / Project Officer (Environment)).

CCSG22/40. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(8)

The date of the next "informal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 26 January 2023 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:30pm

CCSG221124jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

26 January 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 26 January 2023 at 2:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, A.S. Mier (in part) and G.F. Stevens.

Advisory Officers Present: Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment), Developments Project Manager (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/42. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/43. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 24 NOVEMBER 2022 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

One grammatical error was highlighted in Minute Reference CCSG22/37 – bullet point six should read 2030 and not 2023.

ACTION 1: Minutes to be amended accordingly (Democratic Services Officer).

CCSG22/44. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: Team Charters were being produced to outline how teams would operate going forward, including working from home. A sub-group of the Green Team was developing a staff commuter survey to measure commuting baselines and identify areas to address.

- Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Council Car Parks: The Distribution Network Operator report(s) were still outstanding and expected by the end of January 2023. Some sites had proven to be more complicated than others. A grant funding application to the Energy Saving Trust had been made and, if there were no further delays, it was anticipated that the charging points would be fully operational by May 2023.
- Tree Coverage in Bexhill: Street Tree Project, Urban Tree Challenge Fund: [New Street Trees for Bexhill | Trees for Cities](#) website confirmed locations and species. Planting was scheduled to be completed by the end of February 2023. Tree planting had commenced at Bexhill Down; further dates were scheduled in January 2023. Community planting would take place at Southlands Open Spaces and Sidley Recreation on 14 and 15 February 2023 respectively. In December 2022, a final draft Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy by Treeconomics was circulated to stakeholders and the Council. The document would be considered by the CCSG at their meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 23 February 2023.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: As a result of delays relating to the administration of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, quotes for Phase 1 of the project were only invited in December 2022; an inception meeting was scheduled to be held by the end of January 2023.
- Local Plan: In October 2022, the Council commissioned a report by ARUP to outline the net zero evidence base in Rother to shape the new local plan; draft report was still awaited.
- Solar Panels: An application to the CIL Climate Emergency Bonus Fund was expected by the end of February 2023 to de-carbonise Rye Leisure Centre and Pool.
- Green Assessment Management Plan: Members were advised that discussions were scheduled to be held with the Economic Development Manager regarding the estate.
- Low Carbon Energy / Heat Pumps: A joint HUG2 funding application with Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils for off-gas low-income housing had been made; awards would be confirmed in early 2023.
- Signage at Bring Sites: It was noted that the Battle and Mountfield sites were scheduled to close by the end of February 2023; all other sites would close by June 2023. This item would be removed from the list of projects.
- De-carbonise Waste Fleet: Switching the fleet to hydrotreated vegetable oil would cost the Council an additional £271,159 per annum. A report was scheduled to be presented at a future Cabinet meeting.

All of the projects identified in Section 2 of the report would be removed from the list of projects as they had been completed and were detailed on the Council's [Climate Action](#) webpage. The projects / objectives regarding parish and town councils in relation to bio-diversity audits and declaring climate emergencies would be merged.

During the discussion the following points were suggested and noted:

- Members were encouraged to forward any projects / objectives that were not currently incorporated within the Environment Projects Summary to the Project Officer (Environment).
- It was thought that relevant stakeholders, organisations, community groups etc. would be interested in participating in / collaborating on some of the projects. Therefore, promotion would be key; it was suggested that officers contact the Rother Association of Local Councils to ascertain their interest and to assist with promotion.
- Concern was raised that essential well-used Bring Sites were being closed, particularly within the towns across the district. In some areas, particularly large dwellings / multiple flats where there were no recyclable facilities provided, Bring Sites were the only places where residents could dispose of their recycling. Members were advised that the closures were necessary due to misuse of the facilities e.g. fly-tipping and high levels of contamination. The Council's roadside contamination levels were extremely low. The Head of Neighbourhood Services was aware of these issues and Members were encouraged to forward their concerns to her.
- Councillor Prochak advised Members of the Robertsbridge Repair Café, which provided an excellent repair / mend service to the local community. Funding was required to supply aprons for the volunteers; she was advised to contact Rural Rother Trust.
- The discrepancy proposed within the new Members Allowance Scheme regarding those that drove an electric rather than a conventional vehicle was raised. It was considered discriminatory that Members received a lower allowance for driving an electric vehicle. Consensus was that Members should car share, where possible.
- Councillor Stevens raised some waste enforcement issues regarding small businesses within Rye; she was advised to forward her concerns to the Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community and Head of Neighbourhood Services.
- Improved publicity and promotion of all projects / objectives was essential.

ACTION 2: Members to forward any projects / objectives that were not currently incorporated within the Environment Projects Summary to the Project Officer (Environment).

CCSG22/45. **GREEN TEAM PROJECTS AND SUGGESTIONS SUMMARY**
(5) **(MAY 2022 – JANUARY 2023)**

The Project Officer (Environment) updated Members on the work of the Council's Green Team (GT). The GT met regularly and consisted of officers across all departments of the authority. The following projects were being prioritised / considered / proposed:

- implementation (this year) of the one-digital system for Council Tax billing (reduction of paper bills), opt-in or opt-out still to be decided. Significant benefits would be realised if the 'opt-out' system was applied. On Wednesday 25 January 2023, Members had received a presentation on the new system, and it was understood that the 'opt-in' system would be applied. Whichever system was applied, it would

- significantly reduce the Council's paper carbon footprint;
- a review had taken place of the refreshments provided at committee and other meetings held at the Council. Plant-based biscuits were currently being provided and it was suggested that plant-based milk also be provided. The Director – Place and Climate Change had agreed to trial plant-based milk alongside dairy, to gauge demand. It was noted that costs between the two products were comparable. Plastic free tea bags would also be considered, but this would be cost dependent;
- a staff survey was scheduled to be held at the end of January 2023 to ascertain current travel arrangements and mileage including investigating car pool / sharing and electric vehicles. Once collated, Members would be informed of the results and relevant actions proposed;
- Workplace Environment Policy (WEP): set the consistent minimum expected standard of staff behaviour in the workplace and complemented the Council's Environment Strategy. The GT were developing a draft WEP and it was recommended that the document be included as an appendix to staff Terms and Conditions; and
- to implement an efficient co-ordinated structured recycling system at the Town Hall with the co-operation of the cleaning staff. The GT would continue to encourage their teams to establish a central waste point within their offices.

The following additional suggestions had been raised, considered or actioned by the GT since May 2022 namely, hot water dispensers be switch-off at weekends; switch from paper to digital documents; explore energy efficiency of the Council's IT equipment; review the Member's Paperless Pledge and re-launch for the next administration; and support a cross local authority project to embed sustainable procurement processes.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Digital technology was not necessarily (GREEN) and still contributed to the Council's carbon footprint.
- The Council had significantly reduced its paper carbon footprint e.g. Customer Services, 100,000 A4 paper per annum. Members were reminded that this measurement would be considered under Scope 3 activities within the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. Scope 3 activities were still being reviewed.
- Members were pleased to note that plant-based products (milk) would be trialled at the Council.

CCSG22/46. DAY TO DAY OFFICER CLIMATE ACTION – PROCUREMENT

(6)

The Environment Strategy Officer gave an introduction to procurement and the 'top-down' approach to aligning the process with the Environment Strategy (2020). At present, sustainable procurement was included in the Procurement Strategy (PS) but there were no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress. There were 23 KPIs in the existing PS, four of these related to social value but there were none for sustainability or the environment. Discussions with the joint-

authority Procurement Hub had shown there were also no standard template questions for officers to use relating to the environment / sustainability in the template bank. The Environment Strategy Officer and Projects Officer (Environment) were working with climate officers from Hastings Borough and Wealden District Councils to include KPIs in the PS and create template questions which could be added to the template bank.

In the meantime, officers were being encouraged to include sustainability considerations in their procurements on a case-by-case base. The Developments Project Manager was invited to present his experience of including sustainability and the environment in his recent procurement.

The Developments Project Manager gave a presentation on the sustainability measures that had been implemented and were continuing to be embedded within the Council's procurement processes / criteria. As an example, he demonstrated the procurement process to appoint the Architect to complete a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the public conveniences at Camber Sands. Officers were working closely with the Procurement Hub to ensure that prospective contractor(s) included sustainability measures within all future contractual bids; development was ongoing.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Having example sustainability questions for procurement processes, and prompts to include them in any procurement process would be helpful to officers.
- Incorporating sustainable elements into contractual bids would add value.
- Important to re-use materials or source products (materials) from local manufacturers instead of importing from international suppliers.
- Important that the new Local Plan included robust Environmental policies.

CCSG22/47. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Tree Planting: it was pleasing to note that significant street tree planting had continued and was continuing across Bexhill.
- Concern was raised regarding the additional costs proposed to decarbonise the waste fleet. Members were advised that approximately 98% carbon reduction could be achieved. Investment was essential, as this would contribute significantly to the Council's aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Councillor Langlands suggested that the recently closed Town Hall villas be re-opened to allow the public or charity organisations to use them; they could be retrofitted without cost to the Council. Members were reminded that the villas were closed to save money on energy costs, they were not fit-for-purpose and haemorrhaged money.
- It was suggested that the Council host a Greenfield (Market Place) Event (like a Rural Services Network event) at the De La Warr

Pavilion, to promote the projects / objectives of the Environment Strategy, to advise the local community of the projects that had been completed or were in progress, as well as future opportunities. It was felt this could inspire further public / stakeholder involvement. The Council's Communications Plan was being developed and it was anticipated that this type of event would be incorporated.

- Councillor Osborne advised that the Rye Hospital Trust had spent approximately £700,000 decarbonising the building, by installing air source heat pumps and solar panels. £45,000 energy savings were expected.
- Members were advised of the Rother Environment Group's (REG) Talk being held on 28 February 2023 at 7:30pm on Zoom. The Environment Strategy Officer and Project Officer (Environment) would be delivering a presentation on how the Council's climate emergency was progressing. Members would need to contact REG on info@rotherenvironmental.org.uk for the Zoom link.
- It was noted the contractor for the Village Halls Project had recently been appointed; Members would be kept abreast of developments.

The Chair advised that an update report of the Climate Change Steering Group would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting scheduled to be held on Monday 24 April 2023.

ACTION 3: That an update report of the Climate Change Steering Group be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting scheduled to be held on Monday 24 April 2023. (Director – Place and Climate Change).

CCSG22/48. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

(8)

The date of the next "informal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 23 February 2023 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:34pm

CCSG230126jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

23 February 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 23 February 2023 at 2:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman (in part), P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands (in part), P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, B.J. Drayson (in part), G.F. Stevens and J. Vine-Hall (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change (in part), Head of Neighbourhood Services (in part), Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: John Rose – Treeconomics, Kate Sheldon – Trees for Cities and Suzanne Simmons – Trees for Cities.

CCSG22/49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/50. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG22/51. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 26 JANUARY 2023 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

There were no matters arising.

CCSG22/52. SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE - A YEAR IN THE SADDLE!

(4)

The Director – Place and Climate Change presented to Members details and results of a challenge he had set himself at the beginning of the financial year to carry out his normal duties without using his car for business mileage (daily commute not included). In order to assist, he had used the ‘transport hierarchy’ and set a target of 100 cycles to work within the financial year.

A combination of cycling, use of buses and trains, walking and car share opportunities had been used on all visits made across the district and further afield, with actual travel time not differing that greatly from personal car use only.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and the following points were noted during the discussions:

- business travel did take more time to plan when not using a personal car;
- bus services were often limited and bicycles could not be taken on board;
- there was limited space for bicycles on trains, but if avoiding school and peak commuter times, there were no issues;
- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) were planning to invest in improvements to the Eastbourne to Newhaven bus service and extend the 99 and 98 bus services between Hastings and Eastbourne, which would benefit Sidley in Bexhill;
- pot holes in the roads were hazardous to cyclists, but shared pathways for walkers and cyclists had proved the most dangerous;
- consideration should be given to bicycle hire within the towns, together with charging points for e-bikes. In addition, a 'ring to order' community bus;
- improvements were required to bus services to and from the rural areas;
- consideration should be given to a fleet of e-bikes for staff use for business mileage, although counter-productive if staff would have to drive to pick up a bike;
- in a recent survey, transport was shown to be the highest carbon emitter in Rother;
- more work was required to lobby ESCC concerning bus services, including municipal bus schemes;
- consider educating children on the benefits of cycling through the cycling proficiency scheme and the biking to school initiative; and
- discussions had begun with business mileage users concerning the use of e-bikes.

CCSG22/53. BEXHILL TREE PLANTING STRATEGY

(5)

The Chair welcomed John Rose of Treeconomics and Kate Sheldon and Suzanne Simmons of Trees for Cities to the meeting, who introduced the Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy (BTPS).

The BTPS outlined the Council's plans in collaboration with Treeconomics, i-Tree and Forest Research to increase the tree canopy across Bexhill, by providing a baseline for the existing urban forest, while strategically exploring opportunities for future planting. The BTPS signposted best practice and guidance regarding planting, care and management of new trees. It detailed information on the urban forest; policy; existing trees and woodland; planting; and monitoring and review.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Leylandii trees were not biodiverse and further information was requested on any experiences with encouraging residents to replace with more suitable trees;
- trees planted as part of the BTPS were covered by a 3-year watering plan to enable trees to become established before the ongoing care

was passed to the Council and the community. This also included street trees;

- Members were concerned to note that only 41.5% of trees in Bexhill were in good or excellent condition, which included those on private land;
- trees to be planted in the potential plantable spaces detailed in the report would need to be paid for by additional funding;
- trees planted in high streets would incur a different level of expenditure due to excavation costs etc.;
- another round of the Urban Tree Challenge funding would be available and a bid could be submitted. Conversations had already begun with East Sussex County Council;
- a submission for 'Tree City of the World' had recently been entered;
- trees had not been planted outside properties whose residents had objected; and
- the Environment Strategy email inbox had received messages conveying thanks for trees that had been planted.

The document would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting and the project progressed in the next financial year.

ACTION 1: Further information would be provided on any experiences in other Councils of encouraging residents to replace leylandii with more biodiverse trees. (Treeconomics)

CCSG22/54. **PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE**

(6)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: A staff commuter survey to measure commuting baselines and identify areas to address had been drafted and would be posted on the Staff Notice Board before the end of February 2023.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Delays had been caused as a result of some of the plans being re-designed and quotes were awaited. Quotes had been received for five car parks. A grant funding application would be submitted on receipt of the remaining quotations. Report to be presented to Cabinet in March regarding funding to be included in the Council's Capital Programme.
- Roll out of "One Digital": Managers' briefing held on 1 February 2023 – awaiting confirmation of roll-out date.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: LASER Energy had been appointed to deliver Phase 1 – Net Zero Plan for each hall. Discussions were ongoing to confirm how Phase 2 (installations) funding would be distributed.
- Local Plan: A first draft of ARUP's report had been received and would be reviewed by officers, prior to a briefing being arranged for Members.

- Recycling Increased: The Environment Strategy Officer had attended the Strandliners “Love our Rother” event on 18 February 2023 in Rye.
- Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) adopt Climate Emergency Policies: Assistance had been offered to all P&TCs regarding Climate Emergency declarations. The Environment Strategy Officer had attended Sedlescombe Parish Council’s December 2022 meeting to provide full information including next steps. Advice and support had been given to Battle Town Council’s Climate and Ecology Sub-Committee and Brightling Village Environmental Group.
- Solar Panels: An application of £5,000 would be submitted to Sport England for an energy review. No de-carbonise commitments would be made until the operating future of Rye Sports Centre beyond 2026 had been decided.
- Green Assessment Management Plan: Enquiries were being made to undertake a biodiversity audit for all Council green assets.
- Develop Plan to ensure all Council Assets were Carbon Neutral: The Council would have limited decarbonisation influence in Council-owned properties where the tenants were responsible for heating systems etc.
- Low Carbon Energy / Heat Pumps: A joint HUG2 funding application with Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils for off-gas low-income housing was unsuccessful. Additional funding opportunities would be available later in the year and targeted mail would be sent direct in March and May 2023.
- Promote Re-usable Nappy Scheme(s): Advice had been sought from Wealden District Council regarding their service; potential issues related to officer capacity etc.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- EV charging points in Council car parks would cost in the region of £300-350k – 40% met through funding and the provider to fund 60%, therefore there was no cost to the Council;
- the Climate Emergency section of the Council’s website detailed all village halls that were part of the Village Halls project and information had also been provided in a recent press release; and
- a report to Cabinet in March 2023 would provide details of the EV charging points in Council car parks, together with the car parks concerned.

CCSG22/55. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- the spraying of toxic weed killer on pavements had been raised as an issue at public question time at meetings of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) previously and alternatives were being trialled;
- an application form on the ESCC website was available for residents to complete who wished to plant wild flowers in the grass verge in front of their property, which would be logged and mowing therefore not occur. Members expressed concern that in some cases, mowing still occurred, but this was a matter for ESCC;

- Members raised concerns that sustainability and environment considerations were not being used in procurements of contracts following previous discussions. Members gave an example of reviews of the Joint Waste Contract performance being outsourced to independent inspectors based in Southampton, as it may have been the preferred option in terms of value for money. Members were advised that qualified, independent inspectors could not always be sourced locally, but there would be an environment clause in the contract to address carbon emissions from travel; and
- Members noted and passed on their thanks to Biffa for sweeping away weeds from streets in Battle recently and also noted that the East Sussex Youth Offenders Support team had organised for their young people to remove weeds and graffiti in Rother.

CCSG22/56. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(8)

The date of the next “informal” meeting was arranged for Thursday 30 March 2023 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 4:05pm

CCSG230223jhlh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

30 March 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 30 March 2023 at 2:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillor P.C. Courtel (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change (in part), Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/58. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

**CCSG22/59. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 23 FEBRUARY 2023 –
MATTERS ARISING**

(3)

There were no matters arising.

CCSG22/60. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: The staff Climate Change and Commuter Survey had been completed with 104 responses received. The findings would be shared internally, and the Green Team would use the data to develop initiatives to tackle travel emissions.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: On 28 March 2023, Cabinet received an update / progress report and recommended authority to accept associated funding from the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme. As soon as final costs were received from the provider, a bid submission would be made.
- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill (Street Tree Project / Urban Tree Challenge Fund): The fifth round of England’s Urban Tree Challenge

Fund was now open, and talks were ongoing with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to consider another application.

- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill (Green Recovery Challenge Fund Project): All planting was completed by end of February 2023.
- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill (Complete I-Tree Eco Survey): Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy was presented to the CCSG in February 2023 and was available on the Trees for Cities website at the following link: [Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy V7.1 \(treesforcities.org\)](https://treesforcities.org/Bexhill-Tree-Planting-Strategy-V7.1).
- Roll out of “One Digital”: The platform was being rolled out on an ‘opt-in’ basis for paperless billing.
- Village Hall Carbon Emissions: LASER Energy had been appointed to deliver Phase 1 – Net Zero Plan for each hall, with a deadline of 31 May 2023.
- Local Plan: It was clarified that the Council would liaise with the parish and town councils prior to formal consultation. It was anticipated that the public consultation would be held in June / July 2023 (delayed due to the elections in May 2023).
- Charging Points for Electric Bikes: Currently there was no industry standard for e-bike chargers; therefore, this project would not be pursued, due to potential risks, technology, and legislative advancements. Once industry standards were introduced, this project would be reconsidered.
- Supply Composters: Environment Bill regarding the introduction of food waste collections was expected in 2025.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- clarity was sought on the current EV Charging point issues within Rye. Members were advised that this was attributed to the low levels of electricity supply within the area. UK Power Networks had advised that more power would be required to support EV charging points within the town. Once increased power supply to the sub-stations was completed (anticipated in 2023/24), EV charging points could and would be considered / explored. The Director – Place and Climate Change advised that initially existing regional (larger) sub-stations must be upgraded before smaller areas such as Rye;
- at present, EV Charging funding opportunities were still available until March 2024;
- Members were advised that UK Power Networks had set up an initiative known as Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) which addressed power supply and demand including electricity to EV and charging infrastructure. It was understood that a countywide rather than district assessment would be beneficial; therefore, discussions were being held and would continue to be held with ESCC;
- explore further income generation projects, such as creating solar farms on Council-owned land, ensuring that the character and appearance of the district (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) was maintained. In general, it was considered important that the district’s landscape was retained against income generation opportunities, such as solar farms; and
- important that all new building developments included carbon neutral (friendly) products / materials etc.

CCSG22/61. BIODIVERSITY AUDIT – VERBAL UPDATE

(5)

The Environment Strategy Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the Biodiversity Audit of the Council's assets. The following was noted:

- the purpose of the Audit was to understand the quality of the Council's current green spaces and to assess their benefits for and potential of biodiversity net gain (BNG);
- it was important that, where appropriate, the Council actively managed its greenspaces to maximum carbon reduction effectiveness;
- BNG would be mandatory from November 2023 with a 10% net increase expected;
- Biodiversity Metric 4.0 was an accounting tool that could be used for the purpose of calculating BNG for either on-site or off-site opportunities;
- Members were shown examples of BNG assessments completed at Cambridge City Council, where significant percentage habitat improvements had been recommended to support a Biodiversity Action Plan;
- 23 sites within the nature corridor of Rother (over 0.2 ha) had been identified, excluding Bexhill. Included a range of different sites namely recreation grounds, to woodlands, to grazing land, to public open spaces and to playing fields etc.; and
- consideration would also be given to asset devolvement, tenanted land, seasonal surveys (6-month process), Phase 2 (using the same contractor) which would also be dependent on securing additional funding.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- road / grass verges provided an excellent habitat for wildlife and haven for biodiversity. It was understood that public opinion on road / grass verge cutting was mixed. Therefore, it was considered important to develop with the Neighbourhood Services Team and East Sussex County Council a robust public awareness campaign to outline the benefits of not regularly cutting road / grass verges to support the environment;
- suggest installing signs on road / grass verges explaining why they were not being cut, including outlining the benefits;
- Tilling Green, Rye: planned to establish a Community Interest Company to support composting in Rye. Implications were unknown for the future;
- concern was aired that Bexhill was losing significant amounts of its green spaces to housing development;
- Broad Oak Park, Bexhill was suggested as a potential biodiversity project. Members were reminded that, at present, the audit focused on non-Bexhill council-owned assets only;
- it was understood that Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council were supporting a biodiversity project similar to that of a Biodiversity Audit across Bexhill;

- public awareness and education were considered key to ensure that the public were fully engaged with the Council's climate emergency aspirations;
- Members were advised that Natural England had developed a set of principles of green infrastructure which the Council would use as a baseline to improve biodiversity across its assets;
- a Wilder Rother Project would be developed which would include engagement with the community and landowners (including farmers) across the district; and
- it was suggested that a Farmers' Forum be established to ascertain their views / suggestions on BNG.

All nature recovery opportunities were being explored and a report would be presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.

ACTION 1: To establish a Farmer's Forum to ascertain their views / suggestion on biodiversity net gain. (Environment Strategy Officer).

ACTION 2: To present a nature recovery report at a future meeting. (Environment Strategy Officer).

CCSG22/61. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(6)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- It was suggested that a Climate Change Directory be created to include all relevant contact details e.g. Rother Environment Group, Bexhill Environment Group etc. including a description of projects; this could be outsourced to a voluntary group to establish.
- The Council's Climate Emergency webpages were being revamped to enable easier navigation.
- Councillor Osborne highlighted the complicated process and amount of paper involved regarding the Nomination Papers for the upcoming local Elections. This was a national system devised by the Electoral Commission which was totally out of the Council's control. Where possible, the Council was cutting back on and becoming paper free.
- Urban Tree Funding: Members were advised that Bexhill College and some local schools had indicated their interest in a joint project. Once all interested parties were known, a bid would be submitted.
- It was clarified that the minutes of the informal meetings of the Climate Change Steering Group were uploaded to the Council's website at the following link: [Our climate action so far – Rother District Council](#).
- It was clarified that the cups supplied at the Town Hall were plant-based cups (not plastic) which were compostable.
- It was thought that a Veg First (plant-based) treaty might be too rigid for Rother District Council.
- The Environment Strategy Officer advised that she would be attending internal working groups to discuss environmental opportunities to be included with the Council's developing new Local Plan.
- Members requested that a food waste report be considered at a future meeting.

ACTION 3: That a food waste report be considered at a future meeting.
(Director – Place and Climate Change)

CCSG22/62. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING
(7)

The date of the next “informal” meeting was arranged for Thursday 27 April 2023 at 2:30pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:41pm

CCSG230330jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

27 April 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 27 April 2023 at 2:30pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs. V. Cook and P.C. Courtel.

Advisory Officers Present: Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG22/63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG22/64. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Langlands Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a Director of Bexhill Community Bus Service.

CCSG22/65. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 30 MARCH 2023 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

Clarity was sought on the following:

- Climate Change Directory: in progress.
- Farmers’ Forum: in progress.
- Nature Recovery Strategy: this was a statutory requirement and East Sussex County Council was the responsible body. Strategy development was underway and Rother District Council officers were contributing via working groups.
- Food Waste Collection: it was considered important that the new administration understood the complex implications of the introduction of food waste collections. It was suggested that a Members’ briefing be held on the Waste Contract, including the implications of food waste collections.

Members’ would be kept abreast of all project developments.

ACTION 1: To organise a Members' Briefing on the Joint Waste Contract, including the implications of food waste collections. (Deputy Chief Executive / Director – Place and Climate Change).

CCSG22/66. **PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE**

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Council Staff Travel Emissions: A Green Team Workshop had taken place on 24 April 2023 which included a session on ideas for tackling staff travel emissions, as well as considering the emissions data collated. Priority, achievable and impactful projects would be forwarded to the Senior Leadership Team for consideration by the end of May 2023.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: On 27 March 2023, Cabinet recommended authority to accept associated funding from the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) to be included within the Council's Capital Programme. Full costings were received from the provider on 4 April 2023. Unfortunately, full details of the 2023/24 ORCS were still awaited; as soon received, a bid submission would be made. A separate funding scheme was scheduled to be launched by East Sussex County Council to support on-street EV charging points across the county. It was anticipated that over the next 12-36 months the district's EV infrastructure would be significantly improved. Members would be kept abreast of all developments.
- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill (Street Tree Project / Urban Tree Challenge Fund): Local schools had been contacted regarding the location of the next round of tree planting. Members were advised that Bexhill College had expressed an interest in contributing towards the next round of funding.
- Local Plan: The latest update on the Local Plan was detailed on the Council's website at the following link: [Local Plan Review – Rother District Council](#). A range of working groups including key internal stakeholders were scheduled to be held over the coming weeks.
- Incentivise Parish and Town Councils (P&TC) to adopt Climate Emergency Policies and encourage Biodiversity Audits: On 15 March 2023, the Environment Strategy Officer (ESO) attended Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council's Climate Committee meeting to discuss their Climate Action Plan, as well as progress on Rother's Environment Strategy. In April, the ESO had given a keynote presentation to the Rother Association of Local Councils and she would be attending future meetings to encourage and support the P&TCs with Climate Emergency declarations and Action Plans. It was noted that Udimore and Icklesham Parish Councils were holding discussions regarding declaration plans and EV charging, respectively.
- Green Asset Management Plan: An inception meeting was held on 24 April 2024.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Rye Sports Centre: clarity was sought regarding progress on the proposed decarbonising project of the Sports Centre. The opportunity of establishing a Community Interest Company (CIC) was being explored, to control the operation of the Sports Centre from the current provider, Freedom Leisure (FL). The contract between the Council and FL was scheduled to end in 2026. Until the issue of a CIC had been resolved, it was difficult to progress this project. All grant opportunities including Community Infrastructure Levy funding would be considered. Councillor Osborne advised that FL had recently taken control of the operation of the Tenterden Leisure Centre and had re-opened the swimming pool at that facility.
- Hydrogen Cars: important to explore all low carbon energy opportunities, as electric battery recycling / disposal could be problematic.
- Electric Bike Scheme: important to signpost / spread awareness of the benefits of using electric bikes. The Council to consider operating an electric bike hire scheme to staff and the community. Where feasible, all opportunities would be explored.
- Wildflower Areas: it was hoped that all roadside verges and some green spaces across the district e.g. Polegrove, Bexhill would be unmowed during May 2023. The Environment Strategy Officer advised that some areas would not be mowed until after May 2023; details of the exact locations were awaited. Once known, information would be advertised across all Council social media platforms.
- Community Composting: delayed mowing might cause issues with removal of green waste by our contractors, however existing community composting schemes or environmental groups might be willing to assist with removal and processing of the waste.

CCSG22/67. **CARBON LITERACY TRAINING – VERBAL UPDATE**

(5)

The Climate Change Steering Group was advised that both the Environment Strategy Officer and Project Officer (Environment) were fully Carbon Literacy trained and completed 'Train the trainer' training which also meant that they were qualified to deliver this training to Councillors and officers, as well as other local authorities. Toolkits had been provided from the Carbon Literacy Project for Elected Members, Leadership and Management and General Staff. The Carbon Literacy Project was also releasing a new toolkit for Parish and Town Councils which would be requested when available. This would significantly reduce the costs involved with future training. However, certification fees and officer time would still be a factor.

The Environment Strategy Officer advised that the Council would be working towards a Carbon Literacy "Gold" standard. At present, the Council could qualify for "Bronze", but an application had not been made. There was limited scope to change the content of the Toolkits but there were sections which could be edited to provide local examples. Members were asked to propose specific areas to focus on and to forward, if available any photographic evidence they might have e.g. areas prone to regular flooding across the district etc.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- it was not known whether the Carbon Literacy training was offered to the public. Toolkits were available and designed for specific sector audiences;
- what justified a “gold, silver and bronze” standard? Members were advised that the standards were subject to different criteria, such as how many people were certified, certification of the senior leadership team etc.; and
- it was suggested and felt that Carbon Literacy training should be mandatory for all Members and be included as part of the Induction Programme. Future training opportunities to be considered by the new administration.

ACTION 2: Members to forward proposed specific areas for the Carbon Literacy training including photographic evidence, if available. (Environment Strategy Officer / Project Officer (Environment)).

CCSG22/68. **POTENTIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR THE NEXT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY PANEL– VERBAL UPDATE**
(6)

The Environment Strategy Officer advised that the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Panel was scheduled to meet in June 2023 and asked Members to consider / propose projects for the Panel to consider. Most of the current level of CIL funding had been assigned; therefore, it was anticipated that a Panel would not be held (for some time) until funding levels had been replenished.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- an electric community bus for Bexhill to transport residents to and from the town. Members were advised that this project was being considered by Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council (BTC), as part of their Climate Emergency Action Plan. Advice would be sought from BTC regarding project progress;
- prior to some projects being proposed, it was felt that further consideration / research should be given to the benefits of using carbon neutral hydrogen technologies; and
- in general Members were supportive of introducing hydro electric vehicles across the district.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Langlands declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Director of Bexhill Community Bus Service and in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

CCSG22/69. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
(7)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Southern Water – Leaky Water Butt: To reduce flooding in Fairlight, Members were advised that Southern Water would be introducing a water saving scheme by providing each household with a free ‘leaky’ water butt. Water butts harvest rainwater from gutters and help

prevent floods and sewer overflows. Members were fully supportive of this scheme and felt that rainwater capture opportunities should be explored and promoted by the Council.

- Explore the opportunity of introducing and encouraging developers to include “grey water” (recycled bath and shower water, filtered and disinfected) methods within planning applications. It was suggested that the Council worked with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to include grey water recycling as part of Building Regulations. Councillor Osborne advised that new build development regulations included water recycling, electric vehicle and insulation technologies.

CCSG22/70. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(7)

Future meetings to be decided by the new administration.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:11pm

CCSG230427jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28 September 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors S. Burton, Mrs. V. Cook, S.B. McGurk, C. Pearce (in part) and A. Rathbone Ariel (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change (in part), Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment) and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG23/01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/02. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CCSG23/03. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 27 APRIL 2023 – MATTERS ARISING

(3)

Progress was sought on the Electric Bike Scheme. Members were advised that a Cycle to Work Roadshow was relaunched at the Town Hall in the summer and all staff were being encouraged to use low carbon travel options, where possible. At present, there was no secure covered / shelter facilities for bicycles at the Town Hall; this was currently being investigated and would be financed via the Human Resources department. For security purposes, the shelter would be located in the rear car park (not in public view). It was understood that electric bicycle batteries were removable and could be charged inside the Town Hall, subject to PAT testing.

Concerns were raised that in-house funding was limited for smaller carbon reduction projects and that, in general, external funding opportunities would need to be sourced. It was clarified that Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy funding could only be applied for and used for the larger infrastructure type projects.

The Director – Place and Climate Change advised that a £104,000 annual budget was assigned to the climate projects, which included funding for the Environment Strategy Officer and Project Officer

(Environment) posts. This funding had also been used for the Couch to Carbon Zero Scheme and carbon literacy training.

CCSG23/04. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(4)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Evaluate & Reduce Council Staff Travel Emissions: Green Team priorities were a) publish staff commuter survey findings (completed); b) promote active travel, public transport and low emission vehicles providing costs (w/c 25 September 2023); c) explore adopting staff benefit packages regarding public transport and low emission vehicles; and d) ensure team agreements supported home and office working including the environmental impact on travel.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Council Car Parks: On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme funding still to be realised. Enquiries were underway to explore 100% supplier funded models that did not rely on funding.
- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill: Over 200 trees were planted in Spring 2023; approximately 100 trees were scheduled to be planted in Autumn / Winter 2023. Bexhill was recognised as a Tree City of the World. An application was being considered to the Coronation Living Heritage Fund, which would allow the Council to plant 'micro woods' in urban areas and offer grants for community orchards.
- Biodiversity Audit: Site audits had been completed; a report and findings would be presented at the meeting scheduled to be held on 30 November 2023.
- Reduce Village Halls Carbon Emissions and Install Electric Vehicle Charging Points: Phase 1 was completed in June with bespoke Net Zero Plans issued to 39 participating halls. Grant funding offers were being drafted and would be issued to halls as soon as possible. Additional funding options were being explored.
- Local Plan: The latest update on the Local Plan was detailed on the Council's website at the following link: [Local Plan Review – Rother District Council](#).
- Plant More Wildflower Areas on Green Spaces: Biodiversity Audit surveys for 23 Council-owned green assets, outside Bexhill had been completed. Reports with recommendations for biodiversity enhancements were expected by the end of November 2023.
- Meet the Target Page on the Council Website for Tree Coverage: Available on the Council's website at the following link: [Trees – Rother District Council](#)
- Incentivise Parish and Town Councils to adopt Climate Emergency Policies and encourage Biodiversity Audits: The Environment Strategy Officer (ESO) had attended three Battle Town Council (BTC) Climate and Ecology Committee meetings where key actions to reduce emissions were identified. BTC were calculating their operational emissions. Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council had declared a climate and ecological emergency; the ESO would sit on their working group and assist with climate action planning. The

ESO had attended Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish Council, East Guldeford Parish meeting and Brede Parish Council and presented a report on declaring a climate and ecological emergency including next steps. The ESO had provided climate and ecological emergency information to Brightling and Udimore Parish Councils.

- Green Asset Management Plan: Conversations were underway to define “Green Asset Management” and how this might align with the strategic asset management plan scheduled to be developed.
- Develop a Plan to ensure all Rother District Council assets are Carbon Neutral: The Environment Strategy was currently being reviewed and would be published by the end of 2023; it would include a decarbonisation strategy. In September 2023, the boilers in both Town Hall buildings were replaced with energy efficient condensing gas boilers; significant carbon emission savings were anticipated.
- Low Carbon Energy / Heat Pumps on New Housing and Retrospectively: 566 registrations were made by Rother residents to Solar Together Spring 2023. 115 households had paid for installations with 23 completed to date.
- Promote Repair Swap Shops: Robertsbridge Repair Café was promoted in EcoTips on the Council’s website (September 2023).
- Increase Use of Public Transport and Active Travel: Flexi bus and £2 Government bus fare cap was promoted on all Council communication platforms.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Frustration was expressed that projects were progressing at a slow “drawn out” pace e.g. Village Halls etc. The Project Officer (Environment) advised that it was important detailed assessment / surveys were completed, as some buildings did not consume enough electricity for them to warrant having solar panels installed; it was a complex decision-making process. Other carbon reduction opportunities would be explored, such as heating, insulation, glazing systems etc. It was important that data was collated to see what the most appropriate option for each building was. It was agreed that lessons should be learnt and shared from projects that had been successfully implemented.
- Members agreed that best practice guidance / opportunities should be disseminated via Rother Association of Local Council (RALC) meetings.

CCSG23/05. CLIMATE STRATEGY REFRESH – VERBAL UPDATE

(5)

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) was updated on the Council’s Climate Strategy 2030. Since the Council’s Climate Emergency Declaration in September 2019, significant work had progressed regarding the Council’s Climate Strategy. The existing strategy consisted of eight priorities including 45 pledges. Following on from the consultation responses received in 2020, data / evidence collated, policy changes, and best practice initiatives sourced from other similar local authorities, it was considered an opportune time to reconsider the priorities / pledges and completely refresh the strategy.

It was proposed to reword the Council's Strategy Development – Vision to *“By 2030, Rother will be a carbon-neutral district where climate-resilient communities are well-equipped to deal with the challenges of climate change and are no longer contributing to global warming.”*

The Environment Strategy Officer advised that the revised strategy would be considered at the next meeting of the CCSG scheduled to be held on Thursday 26 October 2023 at 2:00pm.

It was anticipated that the new Climate Strategy would be fully approved and adopted by the end of 2023.

CCSG23/06. LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLANS (LAEPS) – VERBAL UPDATE

(6)

The Environment Strategy Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) which were being commissioned by some local authorities who were looking to create a plan to help address power supply and meet their net zero goals and climate emergency declarations.

Discussions with UK Power Networks (UKPN) and Energy Systems Catapult (ESC) had confirmed that it would cost approximately £100,000 to complete a full LAEP over a period of one year for the Council. No funding was available. Discussions with ESC suggested that a countywide approach would be more appropriate, and currently regular discussions were being held with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the Climate Officers from Eastbourne Borough Council and Wealden and Lewes District Councils. It was understood that ESCC had already unsuccessfully applied for funding. Feedback was also being sought from local energy groups regarding best practice and future solutions / technologies etc.

As a full LAEP was unaffordable, it was proposed to produce a LAEP for decarbonising heat only; a funding application was in progress, and the CCSG would be kept abreast of developments. Members agreed that it was essential that the Council worked alongside all relevant partners / stakeholders to progress the LAEP.

CCSG23/07. PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE – VERBAL UPDATE

(7)

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group would be a “formal” meeting and held in the public domain. The meeting would be held on MS Teams and webcast live. The Council's amended Climate Strategy would be reviewed and considered at this meeting.

ACTION 1: That the meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 26 October 2023, be a “formal” meeting, held in the public domain and webcast live (Democratic Services).

CCSG23/08. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(8)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- **Weedkiller:** Concern was aired that toxic weedkiller products were being used to control the spread of weeds across the district. Members were advised that East Sussex County Council was responsible for the maintenance / upkeep of the district's public pathways and roads. It was clarified that 'NO' pesticides weedkillers were used on all Council-owned open spaces by the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Arboriculture Contractor.
- **Wildflowers – Marina, Bexhill:** Clarity was sought regarding the future of the wildflower beds at Marina, Bexhill. Mixed views had been expressed regarding whether the wildflowers should remain or be replaced by more traditional / seasonal flowers / planting. It was understood that Councillor Bayliss was sourcing volunteer interest to take over the responsibility of the upkeep of these beds. Members were advised that, to date, no decision on the future of the flowerbeds had been made. It was agreed that a cost-effective / appropriate planting scheme should be adopted and where possible, best practice followed. It was difficult to please all, as some people would prefer wildflowers (which required little watering and were sustainable) and others more traditional planting (which would require continuous maintenance). The Council would be open to community-led / volunteer group suggestions. It was recommended that the Council produced a best practice "planting" guide; this was already in the process of being developed.
- **Bexhill in Bloom:** Councillor Gray advised that Bexhill had recently won a 'Gold Award'. She felt certain that the wildflower beds had helped to secure this honour for the town.
- **EcoTip:** Members were encouraged to forward any EcoTips to the Environment Strategy Officer to upload to the Council's Climate Directory on the website.

CCSG23/09. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(9)

The date of the next "formal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 26 October 2023 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:09pm

CCSG230928jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

30 November 2023

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 30 November 2023 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, S. Burton, Mrs V. Cook, B.J. Coupar, T.M. Killeen, C. Pearce and A. Rathbone Ariel.

Advisory Officers Present: Planning Policy Manager, Environment Strategy Officer, Project Officer (Environment), Parks Development Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Will O'Connor (in part) and Lydia Ennis, MKA Ecology.

CCSG23/20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/21. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

**CCSG23/22. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 26 OCTOBER 2023 –
MATTERS ARISING**

(3)

There were no matters arising.

CCSG23/23. RDC BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

(4)

The Environment Strategy Officer introduced Will O'Connor and Lydia Ennis from MKA Ecology to the meeting. MKA Ecology had carried out an evidence-based Biodiversity Audit on behalf of the Council, using Natural England's Biodiversity Metrix. The key advantages / benefits of collating biodiversity data across the district were:

- enabled consistent approach to measuring and predicting biodiversity change;
- ability to measure new habitats;
- identified new areas for restoration or enhancement;
- permitted the undertaking of biodiversity net gain assessment on new developments (on and off site);

- ability to improve the condition of habitats and biodiversity resource; and
- the Environment Act strengthened the biodiversity duty and required responsible bodies (East Sussex County Council) to establish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy – the data collated would be used to support this document.

Surveys were completed across the district which focused on distinctiveness and condition and biodiversity targets were allotted using the Metrix system. Members were advised of the findings regarding Hoads Wood in Fairlight, which consisted of areas of woodland and grassland. The survey identified the current condition of the area, the assessment criteria applied and what measures / interventions could be implemented to improve its biodiversity.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Different landscapes existed across the district e.g. rural countryside, Pevensey Levels etc. therefore it was important that the historic shape of each area was individually considered.
- All wildlife species were considered in each habitat.
- The biodiversity of an urban greenspace could be increased by grassland and wildflower meadows. Battle Town Council had created three wildflower meadows within the parish (Kingsmead). Swathes of the land were cut to allow community access e.g. dog walking etc. These areas delivered recreational and cultural benefits and were a good example of biodiversity.
- Grazing animals or cutting the grass at different lengths stimulated invertebrate diversity.
- Important to work with developers to ensure that appropriate biodiversity habitats were created alongside and within new building developments. Encourage the installation of bat and bird boxes.
- From January 2024, biodiversity measures would be mandatory for all new building developments through the planning process (hold developers accountable).
- It was clarified that at different times of the year, the audit results would vary. For the best results, woodland areas would be assessed from April to May and grassland areas June to July.

MKA Ecology's full audit report would be submitted as soon as finalised. Once received, a copy of MKA Ecology's presentation would be uploaded to the website.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair thanked Will O'Connor and Lydia Ennis for their presentation and attendance at the meeting.

ACTION 1: To upload a copy of MKA Ecology's presentation to the website (Democratic Services).

CCSG23/24. **LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN UPDATE**
(5)

The Planning Policy Manager updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Slides were shown which contained information provided by the Planning Advisory Service and Natural England (NE); these slides would be uploaded to the website.

The CCSG was advised that preparation and establishment of a LNRS was a mandatory requirement under the Environment Act 2021. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was the 'Responsible Authority' and held the legal duty to produce the LNRS across East Sussex which included Brighton and Hove. Rother District Council was classed as a 'Supporting Authority' along with the other local authorities across the county. Both East and West Sussex County Councils were jointly working on the preparation of their LNRSs and had established a Sussex-wide Supporting Authorities Group (SAG) which met monthly. The Council's Planning Policy Manager was a member of SAG, which also included representatives from all the other local authorities, relevant stakeholders, and environmental organisations.

The content of the LNRS was not clearly defined, however it must include biodiversity priorities, local habitat map(s), identify conservation sites, nature reserves and other areas which were or could become of particular importance to biodiversity. The document was important because it formed part of a suite of new biodiversity measures alongside BNG to target efforts to expand habitats and deliver 'nature-based' solutions, as well as provide a common focus to engage the public, private and voluntary sectors.

An interim LNRS would be developed to align with the Council's Local Plan, which was scheduled to be finalised next year. The template would be used by other authorities to develop their LNRSs. It was anticipated that the final draft of the LNRS would be available in Summer 2025.

BNG was a mandatory requirement. From 2024, it would be mandatory for all major (January) and small [not house extensions] (April) developments to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG (the Council's aspiration would be 20%); exact dates were unknown. Calculation would be through NE's Biodiversity Metric (a live document that was continually being improved; the latest version had been released on 29 November 2023). BNG habitats would be secured for 30 years through a legal agreement attached to planning permissions. The Council would be responsible for managing and maintaining a National Register and selling BNG credits. Off-site BNG could allow larger areas of new habitat to be created in the right places. It could enable the Council and other landowners to manage land for nature, paid for by new development. Support was being received from Ecology specialists at ESCC (resources were being increased to assist with the new regulations).

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Concern was raised regarding the increased amounts of and different soils that were being brought into the district to deliver new development, particularly regarding soil content and whether it was compatible to existing soils. Potential for soil degradation / contamination. It was suggested that an integrated strategy be developed with the local neighbouring authorities (Tunbridge Wells and Wealden) regarding the management of soil movement. Members were advised that the LNRS would assist with cross-boundary issues.
- Achieving BNG could cause significant issues particularly for smaller developers.
- BNG created the opportunity for Parish and Town Councils and local communities to become more involved with developments in their areas.
- The Metrix tool provided a foundation, however human intervention would still be required to fully assess BNG.

ACTION 2: To upload a copy of slides to the website (Democratic Services).

CCSG23/25. **CHANGES TO GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

(6)

The Climate Change Steering Group considered the report of the Parks Development Officer which detailed changes made to the Grounds Maintenance Contract/Operations with a positive impact on biodiversity in the Council's parks and open spaces across the district. The following key areas were highlighted:

- during the current financial year, savings totalling £120,000 had been achieved;
- ornamental (short) grass was now maintained to a reduced standard without using herbicides, which removed the potential harm to invertebrates and soil-inhabiting organisms;
- environmental grass was mown annually (this year in September). At most sites the cuttings had been left in-situ to break down over the winter months;
- to achieve maximum biodiversity benefit, cuttings should be removed, however this was costly. Nine sites across the district were scheduled to be maintained to this standard, however issues with the contractor had prevented this from being implemented during 2023;
- reduction in the quantity of seasonal bedding with some areas being laid to grass, wildflower seeded or perennials planted;
- hedges were cut annually at West Parade and Egerton Park in Bexhill and Rye Cemetery. Low hedges surrounding the gardens at Marina, Bexhill were cut bi-annually;
- over the last year, biodiversity enhancements had been achieved across the district, including tree planting and pond maintenance; and
- biodiversity net gain requirements arising from local planning developments were being accommodated at Blackfriars, Coronation Gardens, Kingsmead and Broad Oak Park and could potentially be delivered at other Council-owned sites in the future.

To assist with the Council's funding gap, further savings to grounds maintenance costs would need to be realised. However, further operational changes could potentially impact the appearance and could affect the usage and enjoyment of the Council's parks and open spaces, which would need to be considered alongside the financial implications and biodiversity value.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Reduction in grass cutting had resulted in some complaints and negative feedback being received from the public. It was difficult to please all.
- It was suggested that wildflowers be planted in the Town Hall Square gardens; this would be considered.
- It was important to create varied habitats, as some wildlife species preferred different length grassland.
- Biodiversity would be promoted and created across the Council-owned parks and open spaces, where appropriate.
- Important that wildlife species were able to move around in different habitats – there must be a proportionate approach across the management of parcels of land.

CCSG23/26. MICRO WOODS AND COMMUNITY ORCHARD FUNDING

(7)

Consideration was given to the report of the Projects Officer (Environment) which provided details of an award the Council had received to plant trees in non-woodland and urban areas across the district in honour of King Charles III's Coronation.

£76,173.50 Coronation Living Heritage Fund (CLHF) had been received which comprised of two payments, namely micro woods (£27,149) and community orchards (£49,024.50). Members were advised that a report was being presented to Cabinet in December asking for delegated authority to be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept the award. Planting would need to be completed by March 2025 (unspent monies would need to be returned).

The report detailed planting requirements for both schemes, milestones and timeline of works, ownership and legalities, award criteria (still to be finalised) and potential locations which were still to be agreed, as well as improvements to the public realm and biodiversity benefits. Communications across the Council's social media platforms and a press release had commenced to publicise the CLHF, as well as an article placed in the November Members' Bulletin. Further external communications would commence in March 2024, to publicise the opening of the Community Orchard Grant Scheme and to engage volunteers for micro wood planting events. It was noted that both schemes would be delivered using existing internal resources.

The following was noted:

- Planting would commence in autumn/winter in 2024.

- Micro woods were the size of a tennis court and densely planted with native trees of differing heights.
- Community orchards would consist of five fruit or nut trees.
- Important to involve the community, encourage ownership, plus the potential of sponsorship scheme (reduce vandalism).

CCSG23/27. PROJECTS SUMMARY – UPDATE

(8)

The Project Officer (Environment) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the completed, ongoing, outstanding short, medium and long-term projects. The following project / objectives had been updated since the last meeting:

- Evaluate and Reduce Council Staff Travel Emissions: Appendix A to the report highlighted communications to staff in October and November on sustainable travel, cycling and public transport; there had been good engagement from staff.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points in Council Car Parks: Members were advised that the next round of Government funding had reopened with revised criteria; an application was prepared which included 25 double headed charge points (previously 21). Once updated costs were received (still awaited), the application would be submitted.
- Improve Tree cover in Bexhill: DEFRA's Coronation Living Heritage Funding was approved for micro woods and community orchards across the district:
Both schemes to be planted by 2025.
 - Micro Wood – to plant 3 x micro woods in Battle, Bexhill and Rye (locations to be confirmed).
 - Community Orchard – funding opportunities scheduled to open in April 2024.
- Reduce Village Halls Carbon Emissions and Install Electric Vehicle Charging Points: To date, five halls had accepted funding offers, with 15 expressing an interest in a joint procurement process. The deadline for applications was week commencing 15 January 2024.
- Pollinator and Pesticide Policy Review: Included within the Climate Strategy Action Plan 2023-2026 (formal approval expected in December 2023).
- Low Carbon Energy / Heat Pumps on New Housing and Retrospectively: To date, 39 households had installed solar panels in Rother via the Solar Together 2023 scheme.
- Promote Repair Swap Shops: Robertsbridge Repair Café was promoted on 10 November 2023.

CCSG23/28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(9)

There were no any other business items discussed.

CCSG23/29. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(10)

The date of the next “informal” meeting was arranged for Thursday 25 January 2024 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

The Chair advised that the Climate Change Steering Group would meet once per month, excluding August and December (10 meetings per annum). As there were five aims in the Climate Strategy, one would be considered at each meeting. Therefore, there would be two progress reports on each aim during the year.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:21pm

CCSG231130jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

25 January 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 25 January 2024 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray T.M. Killeen (MBE) and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes (in part), A.E. Biggs, S. Burton, Mrs V. Cook and A. Rathbone Ariel (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Climate Strategy Officer, Climate Projects Officer, Acquisitions Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG23/30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

An apology for absence was received from the Planning Policy Manager.

CCSG23/31. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

**CCSG23/32. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 30 NOVEMBER 2023 –
MATTERS ARISING**

(3)

ACTION 1: It was clarified that MKA Ecology’s presentation had been uploaded to the website and was accessible on the Intranet. Members would need to log-in and select 30 November 2023 meeting (Agenda Item 4 – RDC Biodiversity Audit).

The Climate Strategy Officer advised that MKA Ecology’s full Biodiversity Audit Report was still awaited. Members would be advised when it was received.

**CCSG23/33. CLIMATE STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 1.1 – ENERGY PERFORMANCE
IN COUNCIL-OWNED RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION**

(4)

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Solutions Manager which updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on progress against Climate Strategy Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings, specifically, the action to Retrofit Rother District Council-owned Accommodation to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ‘C’ or above.

Since 2020, the Council had invested in its own residential accommodation and was now a Registered Provider (RP). The Council owned a mixture of Temporary and Rough Sleeper Accommodation properties, as well as two tied-accommodation properties at Broad Oak Cottages and Egerton Park. The Government had commenced talks regarding increasing the minimum standards of letting to an Energy Performance rating of 'C' (currently it was 'E'). The Council ensured that all properties purchased under the Temporary Accommodation (TA) Investment Strategy, had a 'C' rating or were able to achieve that. Prior to purchase, Energy Performance Assessors were consulted to ascertain that a 'C' rating was achievable, as well as assessing the costs to achieve this.

In total, the Council owned 43 properties, 40 of which were 'C' rated. Of the three properties not having a 'C' rating, only one could be increased and works were scheduled to commence once the current tenant had moved out. In December 2023, the Council purchased three new build 'A' rated eco homes in Bexhill which had solar panels and air source heat pumps. Investigations, including costings and upgrade works had commenced and were on-going on non-compliant properties, these included insulation, hot water cylinder replacement, energy efficient and cost-effective heating solutions etc.

The CCSG was pleased to note that the Housing Solutions Team were actively ensuring that the properties purchased through the TA Investment Strategy and those rented through the Rother Tenant Finder Scheme were achieving the required EPCs. This reduced tenant / council costs, as well as the carbon footprint. During the discussion, the following salient points were noted:

- EPCs included tips on the most cost-effective ways to improve home energy ratings to save money;
- energy efficiency / retrofit best practice methods were shared amongst RPs (also via the East Sussex Housing Partnership Board, of which the Council was a member);
- the Government provided clear guidance (including costs) on what RPs could do to improve property energy efficiency / EPC ratings e.g. cavity wall / loft insulation, replace boilers, immersion heaters, windows and light bulbs etc.;
- Broad Oak Cottages – currently 'E' rated, potential for 'B' and Egerton Lodge, Egerton Park 'D' rated – both required investment, costs were being sought;
- concern was raised that electric heating systems did not improve EPC ratings. The Acquisitions Officer advised that following expert advice, an electric heating system had been installed in the Broad Oak property; the rating had improved;
- clear advice / guidance on how to improve a property's energy efficiency should be made available on the Council's website. The Climate Strategy Officer advised that the website was in the process of being updated and this information would be included;
- properties purchased from RPs generally had good EPC ratings;
- instead of upgrading existing properties, it was understood that some RPs sold and built new properties instead. Could the Council purchase these properties, upgrade and sell themselves? The

Acquisitions Officer advised that RPs contacted the Council regarding properties that they wanted to sell. Purchase would be dependent on the area and the standard of the property, plus the costs involved to improve the EPC rating;

- it was understood that some RP properties were sold / auctioned as holiday lets. It was felt that there were too many holiday let properties across the district, more were not required;
- generally, properties purchased with a 'C' rating would not be upgraded; and
- important that the Council's Housing Company focused on delivering high-quality energy efficient properties.

The CCSG was advised that the Council's long-term ambition was to achieve an 'A' or 'B' EPC rating in all Council-owned properties.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG23/34. **ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL – LOCAL PLAN**

(5)

As a result of the Planning Policy Manager's absence, it was clarified that this item would be discussed at the next "informal" meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 2:00pm on MS Teams.

ACTION 1: Rother District Council – Local Plan to be added to the agenda of the "informal" meeting scheduled to be held on 29 February 2024 at 2:00pm (Democratic Services).

CCSG23/35. **ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

(6)

The Climate Strategy Officer sought the Climate Change Steering Group's (CCSG) views on whether an interim Council-led Sustainable Development Policy (SDP) should be developed whilst the Council's new Local Plan was finalised and adopted. The Local Plan was still being developed, required consultation and was not scheduled for implementation until early 2025. The SDP would be used for all Council-led projects (retrofitting and new builds). At present consistency was varied. The SDP would assist with ensuring all projects followed the same processes and procedures. During the discussion, the following was noted:

- resources were limited, therefore concern was raised that unnecessary additional work would be required to undertake development of an SDP, plus what was produced might not be relevant once the Local Plan was adopted;
- it was understood that sustainable development standards were covered in Building Regulations, though these did not include embodied carbon;
- important that all projects were cost-effective and delivered robustly;

- instead of developing an SDP, it was suggested that the Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool (CCDST) be applied to all projects; and
- it was suggested that the CCDST would be applied to all planning applications. Advice would be sought from the Development Manager.

The CCSG requested that the CCDST be investigated to ascertain whether it was sufficient to ensure that sustainable standards were delivered in all Council-led projects. This could / would negate the requirement for an interim SDP.

ACTION 2: To investigate the CCDST to ascertain whether it was sufficient to ensure that sustainable standards were delivered in all Council-led projects (Climate Strategy Officer).

ACTION 3: To seek advice from the Development Manager regarding applying the CCDST to all planning applications (Climate Strategy Officer).

CCSG23/36. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS** (7)

The Climate Change Steering Group's (CCSG) views were sought on the types of community engagement events the Council should / could cost-effectively deliver or attend to promote carbon zero awareness, active travel and waste recycling across the district. The following suggestions were proposed:

- clear / robust communications to be promoted on the Council's website and via all social media platforms;
- deliver roadshow events in larger towns and villages across the district inviting the smaller surrounding villages, to include speakers (expert energy advisors), stalls, energy-efficient product demonstrations etc. This would also provide networking opportunities;
- attend community events organised by Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) or local community organisations e.g. fetes etc.;
- deliver presentations at P&TC, Rotary and Probus Club meetings, as well as local pre-schools, primary, junior and secondary schools, academies and colleges (potential to widen engagement e.g. parents etc.);
- contact relevant organisations to promote green initiative events e.g. Horticultural Societies, Wildabout Groups etc.;
- approach the De La Warr Pavilion to hold a "Climate Awareness" event, inviting all relevant organisations / businesses (similar to Business Fair event they currently delivered);
- seek advice from Bexhill and Rother Environment Groups;
- promote green gardening across the district;
- source relevant literature from Sussex Wildlife Trust or other relevant organisations etc.; and
- compile a calendar of events (those that are likely to be well attended).

The Climate Strategy Officer thanked the CCSG for their comments and would consider their suggestions to compile a suitable programme of events. Members would be kept abreast of all events.

CCSG23/37. **CARBON AND CO-BENEFITS DECISION SUPPORT TOOL**

(8)

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) considered the report of the Climate Strategy Officer which provided details of a [Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool \(CCDST\)](#).

To enhance the Council's reporting process to ensure that clear climate-related impacts were included, it was recommended that the Council adopt the CCDST. The CCDST was developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in partnership with the Tyndall Centre and the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST). Toolkits were used to identify how projects, services and strategies / policies impacted people and the environment.

Appendix A to the report, identified the Council's strategies and projects that had been trialled using the CCSDT, including the Climate Strategy and Coronation Living Heritage Fund. Dependent on the complexity of the project, assessments would take approximately one hour and should be completed at the initiation stage.

It was recommended that CCDST be progressed from May 2024, when new report templates would be introduced as part of an internal project to improve the management of the committee reports process. Staff training would be provided, plus free training tools were available such as YouTube videos etc. It was noted that the Senior Leadership Team was fully supportive of and adopted CCDST earlier this month. The CCDST would be introduced to the Corporate Management Team (Heads of Service and Service Managers) shortly. It would be a compulsory requirement for all Council-led projects / decisions / reports.

A demonstration was shown. The CCSG acknowledged that the CCDST was free to all local authorities, was fully supportive of and agreed it would assist with reshaping project development across the authority. They awaited the refreshed reports from May 2024 onwards.

RESOLVED: That the introduction of the Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool be noted.

CCSG23/38. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – JANUARY 2024**

(9)

The Climate Projects Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the refreshed Climate Action Plan Progress Report – January 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Access Government Funding to Decarbonise Private Housing such as HUG2: Progress to date included sending 1,200 letters to off-gas

Rother properties based on Government data; 3,663 postcards to Camber and Rye; 75 referrals and 31 whole house surveys across the partnership (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes and Rother); and 14 costed schemes (seven in Rother).

- Fund Energy Efficiency Measures in Community Assets through Community Infrastructure Levy, UKSPF: At 18 January 2024, 13 Village Halls had accepted an energy grant offer; six were awaiting the outcome of a joint procurement process. Members were advised that no grant awards had been made as grant funding agreements were still awaited from the Legal Department.
- Support Retrofit Skills Partnership: In June 2023, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) held a Retrofit Skills Workshop and both the Climate Strategy Officer and Housing Needs Manager attended. ESCC had received Government funding to develop a cross-county Retrofit Skills Strategy (RSS). The Council was supporting the development of the RSS through the East Sussex Housing Partnership Board.
- Run a Series of Community Engagement Events to Raise Awareness and Demystify Retrofitting: See Minute Reference CCSG23/36 above.
- Retrofit Rother District Council operational assets to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) 'C': Existing ratings were still to be reviewed. A new Strategic Assets & Estates Manager was employed in January 2024 who would be responsible for development of the Strategic Assets Management Plan (SAMP).
- Retrofit Rother District Council-owned Accommodation to EPC 'C' or above: See Minute Reference CCSG23/33 above.
- Require Council-led Developments to meet Best Practice Net Zero Standards: See Minute Reference CCSG23/35 above.

Transport – Objective 2.1 Sustainable Forms of Transport are Supported through the Planning System:

- Work with Local Transport Authority and Transport for Southeast to ensure Rother's interests are met: The Council was currently collating a formal response.
- Install Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure in Council Car Parks: Funding application was submitted in December 2023 for 25 double-headed EV Charging Points in seven car parks. If successful, a provider would be sourced, and leases/contracts established. Project delivery was expected by March 2025.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council Staff: 2024 training programme would be circulated to officers and Members by the end of January 2024.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- Promote Behaviour Change to Reduce Waste through Corporate Communications: In December 2023, the Green Team conducted a waste audit; results were still to be presented to Senior Management. It was also noted that paper usage was under review.

- Introduce a Decision-making Tool that includes Carbon Impacts: See Minute Reference CCSG23/37 above.
- Improve Procurement Policies for Operational Resources: The East Sussex Procurement Hub was developing a new Sustainable Procurement Policy; first draft expected in Spring 2024.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.2 Increased, Repair, Reuse and Recycling of Goods and Materials:

- Promote Office Swap Shop and Related Activities; Introduce Food Waste Collection from Operational Buildings; and Introduce Glass Collection from Operational Buildings: All three actions would be considered within the recommendations of the December 2023 Green Team Waste Audit Report.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Work in Partnership with Relevant Organisations to Improve the Health of the Water Environments in the District: Regular Council reports were presented to the Rother and Romney Catchment and Cuckmere and Pevensey Catchment Partnerships.
- Introduce Conditions to New Lease Agreements: Responsibility of the Strategic Assets & Estates Manager and would be developed as part of the SAMP.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Work in Partnership with Parish & Town Councils (P&TC) to Carry Out Biodiversity Audits and Create Management Plans to Enhance Biodiversity and Increase Carbon Sequestration in Parks and Open Spaces: P&TCs would be encouraged to apply for Coronation Living Heritage Funding to deliver community orchards in their communities.
- Designate a Proportion of the Council's Estate to 'Wilding' and Nature Recovery: Responsibility of the Strategic Assets & Estates Manager and would be developed as part of the SAMP.
- Audit Council Green Assets to Provide a Baseline for Biodiversity: Report expected in February 2024.
- Adopt the County-Wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS): The Council was a supporting authority on LNRS development; the Planning Policy Manager was representing the Council at Working Group meetings.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Participate in Collective Buying Schemes such as Solar Together: As at December 2023, 41 Rother households had solar panels installed.
- Carry out Heat Demand Mapping: Specification established in partnership with ESCC, Eastbourne Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Wealden District Council for tender by end of January 2024.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Total frustration was aired that the Village Hall energy grant awards had still not been received by Village Hall Trusts, even though some of the works had been completed. The Climate Projects Officer advised that legal processes had proved to be more convoluted than expected. It was anticipated that the legalities would be sorted within the next few weeks and grants would be awarded. The Chair agreed to raise the CCSG's concerns with the Chief Executive at their next meeting.
- "In progress" meant that information was still awaited from Project officers.
- Local Plan actions would be removed unless the CCSG was receiving a relevant report.
- Members were supportive of the refreshed document.

Councillor Osborne advised that two public Electric Vehicle Charging Points were now located and operational in Cinque Ports Street in Rye.

CCSG23/39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(10)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- The Climate Strategy Officer advised that prior to the meeting, she had attended an East Sussex Climate Summit for Schools, which was led by school children and East Sussex County Council. All East Sussex schools, academies and colleges were invited. They had developed a Climate Charter which was available to all educational establishments across the county.
- Councillor Gray excitedly advised that she had recently attended a Worldwide Arboriculture Webinar on Greenwashing, where photographs of tree planting in Bexhill had been shown as a good example of climate action.
- Councillor Mrs Cook advised that she would be attending Battle Town Council's Youth Forum to hear their climate concerns, passions, suggestions for improvement etc.
- Promote green / eco / sustainable landscaping, particularly to smaller green spaces across the district. Potential award schemes.
- To increase networking opportunities and improve engagement with the Parish and Town Councils, the Chair suggested that the Climate Strategy Officer attend a future Rother Association of Local Councils meeting.
- It was clarified that the results and recommendations of the Biodiversity Audits would be used to manage other green spaces across the district.

CCSG23/40. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(11)

The date of the next "informal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 29 February 2024 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:18pm

CCSG240125jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

29 February 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman (in part), P.J. Gray, T.M. Killeen (MBE), and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members present: Councillors S. Burton, Mrs V. Cook, B.J. Drayson, A. Rathbone Ariel and H.L. Timpe (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Planning Policy Manager, Climate Strategy Officer, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG23/41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/42. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

**CCSG23/43. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 30 NOVEMBER 2023 –
MATTERS ARISING**

(3)

Councillor Gray requested that the word “Worldwide” be added to Minute Reference CCSG23/39 and be reworded as follows:

Councillor Gray excitedly advised that she had recently attended a Worldwide Arboriculture Webinar on Greenwashing, where photographs of tree planting in Bexhill had been show as a good example of climate action.

The Climate Strategy Officer advised that some of MKA Ecology’s Biodiversity Audit Reports had been received. Members would be advised when all reports had been received.

ACTION 1: To add the word “Worldwide” to Minute Reference CCSG23/39 (Democratic Services).

CCSG23/44. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINTS IN COUNCIL CAR PARKS
(4)

Consideration was given to the report of the Climate Projects Officer which updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the project to install Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) within Council owned car parks across the district. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2027 stated that installation of EVCPs would begin in appropriate Council owned car parks by 31 December 2021.

Subject to missed deadlines, delayed, revised funding and devolvement opportunities, progress on the project had slipped. The final application for On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) funding was submitted in December 2023, which included 22 double-headed 7kW charge points (a total of 44 EVCP bays) in six car parks (De La Warr Pavilion, Wainwright Road, Sidley, Mount Street – Battle, Upper Market – Battle and Central – Camber). Notification was received from ORCS on 29 January 2024, that £165,000 had been awarded (£7,500 per charge point). 75% would be provided upfront and the remaining 25% on completion (latest date to claim was March 2025). The remaining costs of £190,000 would be funded by the provider. The project continued to progress at nil capital investment from existing Council budgets.

Blink Charging (BC) had been contracted to complete the preliminary feasibility studies and would be commencing the project under a KCS EVCP Framework, which provided more flexibility. The relevant contract documents were being prepared and once BC was officially appointed, it was anticipated that work would commence immediately. Subsequently, public communications would commence to confirm grant award, EVCP sites and project timescales etc.

This was excellent news and the CCSG congratulated staff on the EVCP project and agreed that this was a significant step towards the Council's commitment to become net zero by 2030.

RESOLVED: That the progress and current expected delivery timeframes be noted.

CCSG23/45. STAFF BIKE SHELTER – VERBAL UPDATE
(5)

The Climate Projects Officer advised that after exploring all options, funding had been made available from the Climate Strategy budget to install a secure covered / shelter facility for bicycles at the Town Hall. For security purposes, two car parking spaces had been released in the rear car park (not in public view) for the shelter's location.

Members were pleased to hear that the project was being progressed and agreed that it was essential that a secure facility was provided to protect bicycles from the elements and most importantly prevent theft.

CCSG23/46. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL – LOCAL PLAN

(6)

The Planning Policy Manager updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on progress of the Council's Local Plan (LP) and focused on climate related issues.

Rother District Council's current Core Strategy LP was now more than five years old. The delivery of the new LP was a key priority as it set out the Council's policy response to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis as well as plan for sustainable development up to 2040. The new LP would replace the Core Strategy (2014) and Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (2019). Cabinet would be considering the draft LP 2020-2040 (Regulation 18) at the meeting scheduled to be held on 4 March 2024. A 12-week public consultation period would commence from April to July 2024.

The LP focused on two main climate priorities "Green to the Core" and "Live Well Locally" and several new policies would be included.

Green to the Core

GTC1: Net Zero Building Standards

GTC2: Net Zero Retrofit Standards

GTC3: Construction Materials and Waste

GTC4: Water Efficiency

GTC5: Heat Networks

GTC6: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Proposed Policy GTC1 was explored in more detail, and it was highlighted that it was important to capture "whole life carbon" which included the embodied carbon cost of constructing sustainable low energy housing and re-using / deconstructing building materials and reducing waste when demolished, as well as the operational carbon cost. Members were advised that, at present, there were no industry standards relating to embodied carbon for issues such as deconstructing buildings and re-using materials.

In terms of policy relating to operational energy, a network of over 1,000 built environment professionals e.g. developers, architects, planners etc. known as "LETI" was creating a national toolkit for the future of home and building standards. These standards focused on the creation of low energy use buildings, with a fabric first approach. Policies within the LP were being developed using this toolkit. Wealden District Council was also using this toolkit to develop their LP. The Planning Policy Manager highlighted that a Ministerial Statement, issued in December 2023, prevented LPs using an alternative approach. This was explained in the draft LP text and would be considered following the consultation period.

Live Well Locally

LWL1: Compact Development

LWL2: Facilities and Services

LWL3: Walking, Wheeling, Cycling and Public Transport (outside site)

LWL4: Walking, Wheeling, Cycling and Public Transport (within site)

LWL5: Distinctive Places

LWL6: Built Form

LWL7: Streets for All
LWL8: Multimodal Parking

These policies were based on the NHS / Homes England toolkit and were written to reflect the Council's local circumstances and priorities within the new LP.

The next steps for the LP were outlined which included a 12-week consultation; comprehensive engagement; review representations received; new or updated evidence base; preparation of Regulation 19 (pre-submission of Local Plan); further engagement, if required; submission of Local Plan for examination (before June 2025); examination period; and adoption by full Council in 2026.

During the consultation period, the LP would be available on-line and in hard copy. A series of roadshows / exhibitions / talks to community groups and Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) would be held throughout the district. It was important that all relevant stakeholders were consulted and had the opportunity to comment / make a representation on the document.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Building Regulations differed and were not aligned with LETI standards.
- Important that the Building Industry came on board with climate issues.
- A significant challenge to reduce carbon emissions within older properties.
- "Affordable housing was only affordable if you could afford to live in it."
- The LP provided excellent opportunities for change and was aspirational for the Council.
- Members were encouraged to inform their P&TCs that the document would be published for consultation shortly. Members requested that an A4 "aide-memoir" detailing the main principles / key issues be created to use at P&TC meetings and / or parish assemblies.

ACTION 2: That an "aide-memoir" detailing the main principles / key issues of the Local Plan be created for Members (Planning Policy Manager).

CCSG23/47. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – FEBRUARY 2024** (7)

The Climate Projects Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the refreshed Climate Action Plan Progress Report – January 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Fund Energy Efficiency Measures in Community Assets through Community Infrastructure Levy, UKSPF: At 19 February 2024, eight

grant funding agreements had been signed, four were prepared and awaited signing, eight were still to be prepared. Rural England Prosperity Funding had been awarded to Sedlescombe Sports Pavilion and Robertsbridge Club for community decarbonisation projects. £70,000 was still available and would be rolled over until the funds were spent.

- Use Environmental Health enforcement mechanisms to improve private sector rented accommodation: Since April 2023, seven homes had been improved as a result of licensing and statutory notices being served.
- Work with Parish and Town Councils and other Community groups to engage and educate residents: In January 2024, the Climate Strategy Officer (CSO) shared the Council's Climate Strategy with parish and town councils, offered support to those who wished to make a declaration or action plan; and attended a Crowhurst Climate and Ecological Emergency Work Group meeting. She would be delivering presentations at both Bodiam and Northiam Parish Councils' annual parish meetings.
- Support Retrofit Skills Partnership: The Government had approved East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Retrofit Skills Plan for the county. ESCC had commenced pilot projects. A Retrofit Skills Partnership and Programme Manager would be recruited to lead on this work. The Council continued to support this work through the East Sussex Housing Partnership Board, the Energy Partnership Board and Climate Officer Network.
- Run a Series of Community Engagement Events to Raise Awareness and Demystify Retrofitting: The CSO was collating a list of planned events for her to attend.
- Retrofit Rother District Council operational assets to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) 'C': Recruitment of a new Strategic Assets and Estates Manager had started; they would be responsible for development of the Strategic Assets Management Plan (SAMP).
- Train Energy Champions to work with communities: Since July 2023, Energise Sussex Coast (ESC) had trained five Energy Champions in Rother. Two more training opportunities were in development for 2024; details were still awaited.
- Fund Businesses' Decarbonisation Plans with Capital Grants for Net Zero Infrastructure: The CSO met with Rye Chamber of Commerce to discuss their sustainability ambitions and would be delivering a presentation at their March meeting. Agreement was being finalised with Clean Growth UK to deliver [Net Zero 360](#) and associated grant scheme to 50 businesses throughout Rother. The project was scheduled to commence in April 2024.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.2 New Buildings are Net Zero or Carbon Negative:

- Require Council-led Developments to meet Best Practice Net Zero Standards: It was confirmed that the Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool (CCDST) would be embedded in the Programme Management Framework and training was scheduled to commence in March.

Transport – Objective 2.1 Sustainable Forms of Transport are Supported through the Planning System:

- Work with Local Transport Authority and Transport for Southeast to ensure Rother's interests are met: The Council was currently collating a formal response.

Transport – Objective 2.2 Facilitate the Transition to Low/Zero Carbon Vehicles:

- Install Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure in Council Car Parks: Revised application had been submitted for 22 double-headed EV Charging Points in six car parks. £165,000 had been awarded and project delivery was expected by March 2025.
- Encourage Businesses to Install EV Charging: [Rural Business Grant Programme](#) was open to applicants.
- Support Businesses to Switch to Low Zero Carbon Fleet: [Rural Business Grant Programme](#) was open to applicants.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council Staff: Training events scheduled to be held on 27 / 28 February; 12 / 13 June; 18 / 19 September 2024. Specific Member dates were still to be finalised.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- Introduce a Decision-making Tool that includes Carbon Impacts: The CCDST would be implemented into the reporting system from May, once officers had received relevant training.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.2 Increased, Repair, Reuse and Recycling of Goods and Materials:

- Fund Activities through the Council's RRR Grants Scheme to Reduce Consumption and Increase Repair, Re-use and Recycling: In total £2,073 of funding had been awarded to projects across the district.
- Work in Partnership with Local Voluntary and Community Groups to Reduce Food Waste: £10,000 Government grant had been awarded to Peasmarsh Parish Council to create a community allotment. Members were advised that Rother Voluntary Action had taken over responsibility of the Rother Food Partnership and the CSO would be attending the first meeting.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Introduce Conditions to New Lease Agreements: Recruitment of a new Strategic Assets and Estates Manager had started; they would be responsible for development of the SAMP.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Work in Partnership with Parish & Town Councils (P&TCs) to Carry Out Biodiversity Audits and Create Management Plans to Enhance Biodiversity and Increase Carbon Sequestration in Parks and Open Spaces: The CSO had advised Northiam Parish Council on the requirements to meet the Biodiversity Duty and would be attending the first meeting of the Northiam Biodiversity Working Group.

- Designate a Proportion of the Council's Estate to 'Wilding' and Nature Recovery: Recruitment of a new Strategic Assets and Estates Manager had started; they would be responsible for development of the SAMP.
- Audit Council Green Assets to Provide a Baseline for Biodiversity: Report expected in March 2024.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Participate in Collective Buying Schemes such as Solar Together: The contract with the current provider had ended and options for future schemes were being reviewed.
- Support Local Community Renewable Energy Creation: Eight village halls with the best potential were to be offered Government grants towards solar, covering a minimum of 50% of costs. The remainder would be covered by ESC or halls could match-fund to buy panels outright.
- Encourage Businesses to Install Solar Panels: [Rural Business Grant Programme](#) was open to applicants.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.2 Support Renewable Energy Generation:

- Carry out Heat Demand Mapping: Specification established in partnership with ESCC, Eastbourne Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Wealden District Council and currently out to procurement.
- Encourage Businesses to Install Renewables: [Rural Business Grant Programme](#) was open to applicants.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Clarity was sought regarding progression of the removal of pesticides from products used to control the spread of weeds across the district and within the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract. Advice would be sought from the Head of Neighbourhood Services and a report be presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.
- Members were pleased to see that many of the projects were progressing well.
- It was confirmed that Climate Strategy Objective 3: Resource Consumption and Waste would be considered at the next meeting.

ACTION 3: Advice be sought from the Head of Neighbourhood Services regarding pesticides and a report be presented at a future meeting (Climate Strategy Officer / Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG23/48. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(8)

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Dual bins – would this be considered in the future? The Chair advised that this issue had been discussed at the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee meetings. Due to the high level of contamination expected, it was felt that dual bins would not be

supported. This issue would be raised with the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

- An initiative had been launched in Battle for businesses to calculate their carbon footprint. Could this be promoted throughout the district, and would the Council consider providing a Stage 1 carbon footprint scoring system? The Climate Strategy Officer advised that a presentation from the Council's Regeneration Officer on the Clean Growth UK project would be delivered at the meeting scheduled to be held on 25 April 2024. This presentation would provide information on the initiative to support local businesses in their decarbonisation plans.
- There was an aspirational momentum to create a national "Community Energy Scheme".
- Community Organisations and Parish and Town Councils could apply for On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme funding to install Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) within their own car parks. It was understood that Community Infrastructure Levy funding could also be used for these types of projects. However, installation would be dependent on location and vehicle movement.
- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was responsible for on-street EVCP. It was understood that progress was being made on the project, however issues had arisen regarding locations, footways etc. There would be significant challenges to overcome to deliver a successful scheme. Uncertainty or disagreement could lead to a rise in neighbourhood disputes / anti-social behaviour. Unsafe on-street charging behaviour should be reported to ESCC's Enforcement Team.
- Three new EVCP points were now located in East Guldeford.

CCSG23/49. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(9)

The date of the next "informal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 28 March 2024 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:47pm

CCSG240229jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28 March 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray, T.M. Killeen (MBE) (in part), and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members Present: Councillors S. Burton and A. Rathbone Ariel.

Advisory Officers Present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Climate Strategy Officer, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG23/50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(1)

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG23/51. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

(2)

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

CCSG23/52. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 29 FEBRUARY 2024 –

(3) MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CCSG23/53. CLIMATE STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3: RESOURCE CONSUMPTION AND WASTE – UK ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 IMPACT ON WASTE COLLECTIONS, STREET AND BEACH CLEANSING SERVICES

(4)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on progress regarding the implementation of the UK Environment Act 2021 and the potential extension to the Council’s current Waste Collections, Street and Beach Cleansing Services Contract.

The Environment Act (EA) became law in November 2021 and several new waste policies were introduced, namely packaging extended producer responsibility (pEPR); deposit return scheme (DRS); simpler recycling; waste prevention programme; and environmental targets. The report detailed the requirements of the different policies / schemes and timescales for implementation. Provisions of the (EA) would have a significant impact on society once they were fully implemented over the

next few years. At this stage, it was difficult to quantify what this would mean for the Joint Waste Partnership (JWP), the Council, and the district.

From March 2026 onwards, there would be significant changes to dry recyclable, plastic, food, garden and residual waste collections, as detailed in the report. Clarification was awaited on the introduction of some of the new policies and whether additional funding would be forthcoming and made available to the JWP. The JWP Office had responded to numerous invitations to consult on all aspects of the new legislation and further consultations were ongoing regarding more detailed aspects of payment mechanisms and business packaging consultation. Following feedback from consultations, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) continued to discuss the pEPR and DRS scheme designs with industry to reduce the costs of implementation, where possible. The Joint Waste and Recycling Committee (JWRC) was being kept abreast of all developments.

DEFRA had awarded the Council £300,000, £30,000 and £716,000 ('New Burdens' funding) for the purchase of food waste caddies, communal wheelie bins, and food waste collection vehicles, respectively. The cost of liners could amount to approximately £830,000 per annum for the JWP. Ongoing revenue implications would be a factor going forward and the service design was still to be finalised. Future funding might be generated by the pEPR system. Hydro Vegetable Oil (HVO) vehicles would be used to deliver the service across the JWP. However, the additional cost might prove unaffordable despite the 'New Burdens' funding provided. Officers were engaging with Biffa (the contractor) to fully understand all issues.

The CCSG was advised that the current depot facilities would not have the capacity to accommodate the additional vehicles for the collection of food waste and therefore it was critical that an additional suitable depot space was identified and acquired. Unfortunately, at present the Council did not own a suitable site. The site at Elva Way owned by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had become available and was considered suitable, subject to planning permission and operating licences, as it had previously been used as a highways depot. Biffa had confirmed that it was suitable for a waste depot, however further investment would be required to make it fit-for-purpose. Cabinet had approved the purchase which was being progressed by officers. The Chair confirmed that she had heard, as a Member of ESCC, that the sale of the site had been formally approved. A request for depot 'New Burdens' funding was sent to DEFRA on 8 February 2024 based on the purchase of the site; to date no response had been received.

The current contract with Biffa was scheduled to end on 29 June 2026. Biffa had significantly improved waste service performance and a 7-year extension was currently being negotiated, including EA requirements, as well as all financial implications.

Significant capital and revenue commitments would be required by the Council to implement a food waste collection service, as the current funding would not cover the full costs required to deliver the service.

The CCSG would be kept abreast of developments and Members were encouraged to view the JWRC meetings which could be found at the following link [Browse meetings - Joint Waste and Recycling Committee - Councillors Committees - Wealden District Council](#).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG23/54. **GREEN TEAM WASTE AUDIT RESULTS**

(5)

The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) received and considered the results of the Green Team's Waste Audit that was completed from 4 to 8 December 2023 at the Town Hall and Amherst Road buildings. The findings were detailed at Appendix A to the report, which highlighted that recycling rates were higher where general waste and recycling bins were co-located and that some paper and plastic waste could be avoidable through behaviour change.

Six recommendations were reported to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 20 March 2024, as follows:

- i. general and recycling waste bins be co-located to increase recycling rates;
- ii. decrease the number of general and recycling waste bins to reduce the over-consumption of bin bags as a source of plastic waste;
- iii. improved signage at bin locations confirming what could/could not be recycled, to improve recycling rates and decrease contamination.
- iv. introduce glass and soft plastic recycling to improve recycling rates and decrease recycling contamination;
- v. Green Team to expedite progress on their objective to review paper consumption and develop initiatives to reduce printing, and therefore reduce paper waste; and
- vi. internal communications by the Green Team to encourage the use of reusable drink cups and bottles and reusable food containers to reduce single-use plastic.

Members were advised that implementation of the recommendations could see a 35% and 22% reduction in the number of items being thrown into general and recycling waste, respectively. Recommendations (i) would require a one-off cost of approximately £1,500 to £2,200 and (iv) an annual cost of approximately £925 for glass and soft plastic recycling collections. For the first year, costs would be drawn from the 2023/24 Climate Strategy Budget. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to calculate the emissions that would be saved from implementing the recommendations. Approval had been received from SLT to implement all the recommendations, which would be instigated after the Easter break.

Going forward the Green Team would be focusing on standardising all waste collection areas across both buildings; improved signage; glass recycling bin purchased and installed in the car park; staff behaviour changes; monitoring paper consumption; introducing single use plastics e.g. reusable cups (branded); and "Terracycle" initiatives e.g. zero waste boxes (to recycle the unrecyclable). New initiatives coming forward would be presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.

The CCSG was pleased to hear that staff involvement had been extremely positive, fully supportive of the recommendations proposed and agreed that they would assist in reducing the Council's carbon footprint and was a step towards the Council's commitment to become net zero by 2030.

RESOLVED: That the findings and recommendations be noted.

CCSG23/55. ROTHER FOOD PARTNERSHIP – VERBAL UPDATE

(6)

The Climate Strategy Officer advised that the Hastings and Rother Food Partnership had split into two and the newly formed Rother Food Partnership now sat with Rother Voluntary Action (RVA). She had met with the Partnership Co-ordinator who was keen to work closely with the Council from a climate perspective. Historically, the Food Partnership had focused on the emergency provision. This would continue to form a key part going forward, but RVA was keen to expand the Partnership to include all parts of the food system e.g. growers, supplies etc. A launch event was scheduled to be held on 23 April 2024 and the Climate Strategy Officer confirmed that she would be delivering a talk about the Council's Climate Strategy, focusing on the themes of Resource Consumption and Waste.

CCSG23/56. CULTURE DECLARES EMERGENCY, SOUTH EAST CULTURAL ASSEMBLY – 22 APRIL 2024

(7)

Members were advised of the South East Cultural Assembly on "How do we free ourselves to take action for climate justice?" that was scheduled to be held on Monday 22 April 2024, 10:00am to 5:00pm at the De La Warr Pavilion. An opportunity to explore pathways to action by nurturing enquiry, participation, community-building, radical care, and collaboration by bringing diverse stakeholders together. The event was free and Members were encouraged to attend by either emailing info@onca.org.uk or booking on-line at [South East Cultural Assembly Tickets, Mon 22 Apr 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#). Both Climate officers confirmed that they would be attending the event. In future, a joint event hosted with the Council would be considered / investigated.

CCSG23/57. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – MARCH 2024

(8)

The Climate Projects Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the refreshed Climate Action Plan Progress Report – March 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Fund Energy Efficiency Measures in Community Assets through Community Infrastructure Levy, UKSPF: As at 19 February 2024, five halls had received funds and completed works, 10 had signed grant funding agreements, seven were pending. Eight halls had received offers for at least 50% funding for solar panels. Members

were advised that Battle Town Council had commenced calculating their operational emissions carbon footprint.

- Work with Parish and Town Councils and other Community groups to engage and educate residents: The Climate Strategy Officer (CSO) advised that she had delivered a presentation to Crowhurst Parish Council. She was scheduled to deliver further presentations to Northiam and Bodiam Parish Councils on 18 April 2024 and 2 May 2024, respectively. It was noted that Brede Parish Council had not made a declaration but had agreed to set up a Climate Action Working Group.
- Support Retrofit Skills Partnership: The Council had hosted a Retrofit Awareness Course funded by East Sussex County Council (as part of the Retrofit Skills Strategy). The course was delivered by East Sussex College and offered to staff across the authority (including both Climate Officers).
- Fund Businesses' Decarbonisation Plans with Capital Grants for Net Zero Infrastructure: The CSO had delivered a presentation on the Council's Climate Strategy to Rye Chamber of Commerce and discussed plans to engage businesses with the Clean Growth UK Project.
- New Local Plan – Refurbishment Energy Standards Set through Policy: The Local Plan Review was now available on the Council's website at the following link: [Local Plan Review – Rother District Council](#).

Transport – Objective 2.1 Sustainable Forms of Transport are Supported through the Planning System:

- Work with Local Transport Authority and Transport for Southeast to ensure Rother's interests are met: It was clarified that the Council had responded to the LTP4.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council Staff: It was clarified that 53 officers had completed Carbon Literacy Training.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- RDC Scope 1&2 emissions reduced by 50% year-on-year from 19/20 baseline: 2023-24 emissions would be reported in September 2024.
- Introduce a decision-making tool that includes carbon impacts: On 4 April 2024, Members would be receiving a briefing on the Carbon and Co-Benefits Tool. Two officer sessions were scheduled for April 2024.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.2 Increased, Repair, Reuse and Recycling of Goods and Materials:

- Work in Partnership with Local Voluntary and Community Groups to Reduce Food Waste: The CSO confirmed that she had attended the first meeting of the Rother Food Partnership (RFP). A launch event was scheduled to be held on 22 April 2024; the CSO would be presenting the Council's Climate Strategy focusing on resource consumption and waste and how it related to the RFP.

- Introduce Food Waste Collection from Operational Buildings: Currently, there was no local provision for food waste collections.
- Introduce Glass Collection from Operational Buildings: A recommendation to introduce glass collections was presented to Senior Leadership Team; outcome was awaited.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Work in Partnership with Relevant Organisations to Improve the Health of the Water Environments in the District: The CSO attended a Combe Valley Catchment Sub-Group on 13 March 2024 which included a strategy workshop and update on carp removal.
- Introduce Conditions to New Lease Agreements: Members were advised that an Interim Strategic Assets and Estates Manager had been appointed. The first meeting to consider the development of a Strategic Assets Management Plan had been held.
- Eliminate use of Pesticides, Herbicides, and Peat in Council Grounds Maintenance: Proposals would be forwarded to the Head of Neighbourhood Services and a report presented to the CCSG at a future meeting.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Deliver on Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy: Proposed site for a Micro Woods would be Seabourne Road Recreation Ground, Pebsham, subject to further checks.
- Work in Partnership with Parish and Town Councils to Carry Out Biodiversity Audits and Create Management Plans to Enhance Biodiversity and Increase Carbon Sequestration in Parks and Open Spaces: The CSO had advised that she had attended the first meeting of the Northiam Biodiversity Working Group to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the village.
- Audit Council Green Assets to Provide a Baseline for Biodiversity: Seven reports had been received and would be uploaded to the Council's website as soon as accessibility issues had been resolved.
- Adopt the County-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Website launched [Sussex Nature Recovery | Sussex Nature Recovery](#).

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Support Local Community Renewable Energy Creation: Eight village halls with the best potential were to be offered Government grants towards solar, covering a minimum of 50% of costs. The remainder would be covered by Energise Sussex Coast or halls could match-fund to buy panels outright.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.2 Support Renewable Energy Generation:

- Carry out Heat Demand Mapping: Procurement was ongoing.

CCSG23/58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(9)

The following any other business item was discussed:

- The Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme would be open for applications from Monday 1 April 2024. Grants of £500 up to £5,000 could be applied for towards the cost of planting at least five fruit or nut trees in a new or existing community orchard. Projects would need to be completed and grants claimed by 1 March 2025. Plants could only be purchased from certified / accredited businesses and/or organisations. A list was available on the Council's website at the following link: [Coronation Community Orchard Grants Scheme – Rother District Council](#). It was understood that there was only one located in East Sussex. The Climate Strategy Officer confirmed that she would be contacting them to advise that they might receive several plants enquires over the next few weeks/months.

CCSG23/59. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

(10)

The date of the next "formal" meeting was arranged for Thursday 25 April 2024 at 2:00pm to be held remotely on MS Teams.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:10pm

CCSG240328jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

25 July 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 25 July 2024 at 2:00pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S.J. Coleman, P.J. Gray and P.N. Osborne (in part).

Other Members Present: Councillors S. Burton (in part), Mrs V. Cook (in part) and S.B. McGurk (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Chief Executive (in part), Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG24/01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG24/02. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

CCSG24/03. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 25 APRIL 2024 – MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CCSG24/04. GREEN TO THE CORE IN CORPORATE PLAN

The Chief Executive (CE) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on progression of the Council’s Plan (CP) [formerly known as the Corporate Plan] and in particular with reference to the “Green to the Core” objectives.

Members were reminded of the CP’s 2040 vision, which was, *“In 2040 Rother District will be an attractive and affordable place to live, work and visit. The district will have a **Thriving Local Economy** with diverse, flexible, well-paid local employment and skills opportunities. People will be enabled to **Live Well Locally** within safe and fairer communities, where they can access the facilities, services, and housing they need. Rother will be recognised for being **Green to the Core**, leading the response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies, protecting the historic and natural environment.”* Three strategic objectives were highlighted in bold (in order of preference).

Members were pleased to see that “Green to the Core” was firmly embedded into the Council’s vision for the future. The CE advised that the vision would be used as a development tool when reviewing all Council policies.

The “Green to the Core” objective was to take bold action to tackle climate change and protect the environment in all that the Council did, plus make the district climate-resilient and reduce council emissions to net zero by 2030.

The CCSG was asked to review the “Green to the Core” objectives as currently stipulated in the CP and to suggest any additional actions that they thought should be included:

- **Ensure the built environment is low carbon and climate resilient:**

Members were advised that all of the current actions within this section would be referenced in the Council’s Local Plan. The Council would be actively promoting behavioural change to reduce carbon emissions across the district.

- **Produce less waste and support a thriving circular economy:**

- To develop a clear, robust climate action communications plan to promote, educate and incentivise residents, businesses and community groups to reduce their general waste and improve the district’s recycling rates.
- The Council must lead by example.
- Clear guidance to be disseminated to residents – “what goes in what bin”. Members were reminded that, as part of the Joint Waste Contract, bin stickers were delivered to all residents (a couple of years ago), which indicated what should and should not be placed in each bin.
- A general discussion ensued on non-collectable recycle materials, such as drinks cartons (e.g. Tetrapaks) and where these could be disposed of. The current waste contractor was unable to collect and dispose of drink carton products. The Climate Projects Officer advised that the nearest recycling point for these was at the Tesco Supermarket in Hollington.
- To promote and encourage local small scale composting services, such as the one that was currently operating in Rye.
- To create a Green Business Directory detailing local, sustainable and environmentally friendly businesses, community groups and organisations across the district. Similar to the one created by Somerset Council [About the Great Green Directory \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/about-the-great-green-directory)
- A metric scheme (series of questions) was suggested that businesses and community groups completed, and star ratings awarded (similar to the food hygiene scheme operated by Environmental Services).
- To create a sustainable award scheme for local businesses and community groups. It was understood that Rother Voluntary Action already operated an award scheme.

- **Promote behavioural change to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint:**

To deliver Carbon Literacy training to Parish and Town Councils. Training options would be investigated, and this would be raised at the Parish Conference scheduled to be held in October.

- **Protect our natural and historic environment:**
 - Listed Buildings Retrofitting – balancing the need for preservation with the need for energy efficiency was particularly challenging.
 - There were too many legislative obstacles.
 - It was understood that Government grants were available to assist with retrofitting historic properties.
- **Support the recovery of nature across the district:**

No additional actions were suggested.
- **Produce renewable energy locally:**

Members were advised to read a Geothermal Energy Report, which was written by Dr Kieran Mullan, MP for Bexhill and Battle.

[Dig Deep June 2023.pdf \(drkieranmullan.org.uk\)](https://drkieranmullan.org.uk/Dig_Deep_June_2023.pdf)

Opportunities would be explored across the district and all renewable energy issues would be included within the Council's new Local Plan.

The following additional suggestions were proposed, and general comments made:

- A glossary of words and expressions that were used throughout the CP, with a clear definition be included.
- It was important that wellbeing of residents / social element was linked to the "Green to the Core" objectives. The CE agreed.
- Members were encouraged to forward any other actions that they wished to be included within the CP to the CE as soon as possible.

The next steps for the development of the CP included agreeing the core elements; finalising actions and measures by lead officers; governance / consultation timescales; ensuring service plan alignment; and a Target Operating Model would inform how the Council delivered the objectives.

ACTION 1: Members to forward actions for the Council Plan to the Chief Executive as soon as possible. (Members)

CCSG24/05. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – JULY 2024**

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – July 2024 (June's update had been emailed to Members on 27 June 2024). It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Fund Energy Efficiency Measures in Community Assets through Community Infrastructure Levy, UKSPF: The second round of Village Hall Energy Project funding closed on 28 June 2024; a further £172,700 was committed. All projects should be completed by 31 December 2024.

Transport – Objective 2.2 Facilitate the Transition to Low / Zero Carbon Vehicles:

- Install Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Council Car Parks: As at 15 July 2024, the contract was still being drafted by the Legal Team (delayed as a result of personnel changes). The Provider advised that the system should be installed and operational by March 2025. Questions were raised regarding failure to receive the finalised funding on completion of the scheme (25%) because of delays that were outside of the Councils' control e.g. Highways etc. Conversations would need to be had regarding funding and compensation etc. The Chair was encouraged to speak to the relevant East Sussex County Council officer, Cabinet Portfolio holder and / or Leader of the Council regarding this.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Promote Behaviour Change to Encourage Active Travel through Corporate Communications: The Staff Commuter Survey was repeated in May 2024 (more specific information was requested); full results were pending; however, it was noted that sustainable travel activity had increased.
- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council staff: It was clarified that 70 officers had completed the training; 56 officers were accredited. Several officers had volunteered to support the CPO to deliver training going forward. In June 2024, the Council was accredited as a Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation. A printed framed certificate would be placed in the reception area. The Chair suggested that a digital visual display board be installed in the reception area to advertise these types of messages. The CPO agreed to raise this suggestion with the Green Team's Customer Services Representative at the next Green Team meeting.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- Introduce Residential Food Waste Collections: Neighbour Services were currently managing logistic preparations ready for implementation in March 2026.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.2 Increased, Repair, Reuse and Recycling of Goods and Materials:

- Introduce Glass Collection from Operational Buildings: Unfortunately, no service could be found for the Bexhill area. New waste facilities and signage had been implemented in the Town Hall buildings.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Work in Partnership with Relevant Organisations to Improve the Health of the Water Environment in the district: In future, a member

of the Planning Policy team would be representing the Council at Catchment Partnership meetings.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Support Local Community Renewable Energy Creation: Two village halls had secured Government grants towards solar panels and one village hall for solar batteries.

ACTION 2: The installation of a Digital Visual Display Board in the reception area to be raised with the Green Team's Customer Services Representative at the next Green Team meeting. (Climate Projects Officer)

POST MEETING UPDATE

The Customer Services Team Leader advised that installing a screen in reception at the Town Hall had been considered and it was understood that a screen had been procured. However, due to lengthy IT staff shortages it had not yet been installed, with no current plan for this to happen. Hopefully, this was something that could be done once the IT vacancies had been filled.

CCSG24/06. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) Membership: Councillor Coleman advised that Councillor McGurk would be replacing him on the CCSG. This would require agreement by Cabinet; therefore, a formal report would be presented at the next scheduled Cabinet meeting on Monday 2 September 2024. It was considered an opportune time to review the CCSG's Terms of Reference (ToR). This would be completed at the next meeting which was scheduled to be held on Thursday 26 September 2024. It was noted that any proposed changes to the ToR would require Cabinet approval.
- Councillors Coleman and Gray had met with a local representative of a Plant-Based Organisation, to discuss the Council's policies on using / providing plant-based products e.g. oat milk etc. It was suggested a representative from the organisation delivered a presentation at the next meeting of the CCSG. After discussion, it was agreed that an initial meeting should be held with both Councillors, the Chair and the Climate Projects Officer prior to a presentation being delivered to the CCSG. Councillor Gray was asked to arrange an MS Teams meeting in September.
- It was pleasing to note that the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan reported to Cabinet in July referenced decarbonisation throughout.
- It was clarified that the Council's 2022/23 Emissions report would be presented to the CCSG at the meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 31 October 2024. It was confirmed that this would be a formal (webcast) meeting.
- Councillor Gray expressed her concerns regarding the condition of some of the street trees in Bexhill (and Pebsham). Some were in a

poor state, either dying and / or dead. Councillor Gray was advised to report her concerns to the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

- Councillor Mrs Cook advised that Battle Town Council (BTC) had produced two sustainable policy (guidance) documents regarding catering / for hiring BTC buildings. It was important to remember that some people were unable to eat plant-based products due to allergies etc. She agreed to share the documents with the CCSG.
- Members were advised that Community shops selling 'best before' supermarket products for discounted prices were becoming more commonplace across the district. Councillor Coleman highlighted ArkWhites, Hastings Old Town. It was understood that Rother Voluntary Action supported these organisations.

ACTION 3: To arrange a meeting with a representative from the Plant-Based Organisation with Councillors Coleman, Field, Gray and the Climate Projects Officer. (Councillor Gray)

POST MEETING UPDATE

A meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 17 September 2024.

ACTION 4: The Council's 2022/23 Emissions report be presented at the meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 31 October 2024. (Democratic Services/Climate Projects Officer)

ACTION 5: The Terms of Reference be reviewed at the next scheduled meeting. (Democratic Services/Climate Projects Officer)

ACTION 6: Battle Town Council Sustainable Policy Documents (Guidance) to be forwarded to Members. (Councillor Mrs Cook)

CCSG24/07. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next "informal" meeting would be held on Thursday 26 September 2024 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:09pm

CCSG240725jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

26 September 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 26 September 2024 at 2:06pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S. Burton, P.J. Gray and P.N. Osborne (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG24/08. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs V. Cook.

CCSG24/09. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

CCSG24/10. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 25 JULY 2024 – MATTERS ARISING

Members considered the list of actions, and the following were confirmed / noted:

- **Action 1:** Members to forward actions for the Council Plan to the Chief Executive. It was assumed that actions had been forwarded.
- **Action 2:** Installation of a Digital Visual Display Board in Reception. A post meeting update had been included within the Minutes. A screen had been purchased and was awaiting installation, once resources were available.
- **Action 3:** Arrange a meeting with a representative from the Plant-Based Organisation. A successful meeting was held on Tuesday 17 September 2024. The Plant-Based Council (PBC) had agreed to forward some useful resource materials; these were still awaited. The PBC would be consulted during the development of the Council’s Sustainable Food Policy. It was pleasing to note that the Council currently provided plant-based biscuits for meetings at the Town Hall.
- **Action 4:** Rother District Council 2022/23 Emissions Report to be presented at the meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 31 October 2024.
- **Action 5:** Terms of Reference (see Minute Ref CCSG24/11 below).
- **Action 6:** Battle Town Council Sustainable Policy Documents (Guidance). It was unknown whether this action had been

completed, as Councillor Mrs Cook was not in attendance at the meeting.

Councillor Burton suggested that information on Rother Voluntary Action's sustainable reward scheme be sourced.

ACTION 1: To source information on Rother Voluntary Action's sustainable reward scheme (Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG24/11. REVIEW OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

Since its inception in 2019, the Climate Change Steering Group's (CCSG) initial objectives within their Terms of Reference (ToR) was to produce an Action Plan or Strategy to ensure that the operations of the Council were carbon neutral by 2030, and to identify powers that the Council might exercise to encourage carbon neutrality throughout the district. The Council's [Climate Strategy](#) and [Climate Action Plan 2023-2026](#) met these objectives. It was therefore recommended that the ToR be updated to reflect the ongoing purpose of the CCSG in tackling the Climate Emergency. A copy of the original and proposed new ToR were attached at Appendices A and B to the report, respectively.

The main updates were as follows:

- A shift in focus from objectives to develop a strategy and action plan, to monitor and review the Strategy and Action Plan.
- Updated language to mirror the terminology of the Climate Strategy and acknowledge the Ecological Emergency.
- Updated Member information.

One amendment was suggested for bullet point (6) under Objectives; to be rewritten as follows:

- To liaise with Rother Association of Local Councils to identify citizens across Rother who are climate champions for their communities and to use them to inform on ideas to implement locally.

It was felt that the best platform for raising / promoting the profile of climate champions across the district would be at the Rother Association of Local Councils' Annual Parish Conference. Significant resources would be required to develop / complete this objective successfully.

Members were reminded that any changes to the ToR would need to be formally approved by Cabinet.

After discussion, the CCSG was fully supportive of the amended ToR and recommended that these be approved by Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet consider and approve the proposed amendments to the Climate Change Steering Group's Terms of Reference, as detailed in Appendix B to the report.

ACTION 2: To raise / promote the profile of climate champions at the Rother Association of Local Councils Annual Parish Conference. (Chair of the Climate Change Steering Group / Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG24/12. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINTS IN THE STAFF CAR PARK – VERBAL UPDATE

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) advised that the Council's Facilities Team had been tasked with sourcing sustainable options to install Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCP) in the Town Hall staff back car park. This was a separate scheme from the Council's public car parks EVCP project.

Members were advised that this autumn, the Council would be adopting a new staff benefit: a salary sacrifice scheme to encourage staff to lease and use electric vehicles. Several infrastructure options were being considered, including installing solar panels to provide renewable energy (assist with the electricity supply required). Specific details of the scheme / how it would be managed were yet to be finalised, e.g. whether staff would be charged etc. However, a booking system would be instigated to enable staff to book specific times to charge their vehicles. To reduce costs, installation would be carried out by the Council's in-house maintenance team (electrician).

The Chair asked whether the scheme would be made available to Members, particularly for when they attended evening meetings. The CPO advised that a policy / guidance document would be established, and Members using the EVCPs would be considered.

ACTION 3: Once established, the staff Electric Vehicle Charging Points Policy / Guidance for the Town Hall car park be reported back to the Climate Change Steering Group at a future meeting. (Climate Projects Officer)

CCSG24/13. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2024

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – September 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Run a Series of Community Engagement Events to Raise Awareness and Demystify Retrofitting: In September 2024, Energise Sussex Coast's Eco-Open Homes Events were published in 'MyAlerts'.
- Retrofit Rother District Council (RDC) Operational Assets to EPC C or above and Replace Gas Boilers in RDC Operational Assets for Low Carbon Heating Sources at end of life: Over the next 12 months, the Estates Manager was hoping to recruit into the team

and adopt a property management database to assist in developing a net zero pathway for all Council assets.

Transport – Objective 2.2 Facilitate the Transition to Low / Zero Carbon Vehicles:

- Install Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in RDC car parks: The CPO advised that the first draft contract was imminent (should be resolved within the next few weeks). Installation would need to be completed by March 2025 in order that the final 25% of funding could be claimed. The Provider was confident that installation would be completed by the required date. Once operational, a robust communications strategy would be launched to promote the scheme. Some delays were anticipated, which were outside of the Council/Provider's control, e.g. the co-ordination of works with third parties; compensation might be forthcoming. Members would be kept abreast of developments.
- EV Charging Infrastructure Installed at Council Offices to Support Fleet and Staff Transition to EVs: A decision was still awaited on how the EV Charging Points (EVCPs) would be managed / see Minute Ref CCSG24/12 above.
- Encourage Homeowners to Install EVCPs through collective buying: West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) was preparing a tender for a new joint purchase solar scheme, which would include provision for supplying home EVCPs.

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council staff: The latest course was held on 18 / 19 September 2024; the next was scheduled for December. The Chief Executive was committed to encouraging Members to participate in the training.

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- Incorporating Sustainable Food Principles in Council Catering and at Council-run Events, where possible: On 17 September 2024, Members and officers met with representatives from the Plant-Based Council (see Minute Ref CCSG24/10 above).

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Introduce Conditions to New Lease Agreements: Over the next 12 months, the Estates Manager was hoping to recruit into the team and adopt a property management database to assist in developing a net zero pathway for all Council assets and managing lease agreements.
- Eliminate Use of Pesticides, Herbicides and Peat in Council Grounds Maintenance: A detailed report, including cost implications, would be presented to the CCSG at the meeting scheduled to be held on 28 November 2024.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Audit RDC Green Assets to Provide a Baseline for Biodiversity: As at 16 September 2024, 18 audits had been uploaded to the Council's website - [Biodiversity Audit 2023 – Rother District Council](#).
- Develop District-wide Tree Strategy: This Strategy would be developed in consultation with the Council's Planning Development Manager and Parks Team. At present, the cost implications / resources to progress this action were unknown.
- Designate a Proportion of the RDC Estate to 'Wilding' and Nature Recovery: Over the next 12 months, the Estates Manager was hoping to recruit into the team and adopt a property management database to assist in developing a net zero pathway for all Council assets and grow capacity to consider carbon credits.

Energy Generation – Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all Suitable Roof Spaces:

- Participate in Collective Buying Schemes such as Solar Together: WSCC was leading on this project and was preparing a tender for a new joint purchase solar scheme, which would include provision for supplying home EVCPs. It was understood that the scheme would be time-phased, and each phase quality assessed prior to commencement of the next phase.
- Consider RDC Investment Opportunities for Renewables & Explore Options for Solar Carports in RDC Carparks: Over the next 12 months, the Estates Manager was hoping to recruit into the team and adopt a property management database to assist in developing a net zero pathway for all Council assets.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Micro Woods Project: The CPO advised that, due to lack of resources, the Seabourne Road Recreation Ground, Pebsham site had been removed from the project. All relevant stakeholders had been contacted to ascertain if they would be interested in taking over management of the project; unfortunately, no interest was received. Planting was scheduled to commence in November at Coronation Gardens, Battle and Masons Field, Rye. Members would be advised of the exact dates once known and advertised through the Council's social media platforms.
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPO): Concern was raised that TPOs were being ignored during the planning application process.
- Councillor Gray reiterated her concerns regarding the condition of some of the street trees in Bexhill (and Pebsham). There was a general lack of care, some were in a poor state, high proportion were either dying and / or dead, and protective webbing was broken / not being replaced. This significantly impacted the Council's reputation to protect the district's street trees. Members were reminded that maintenance of street trees was the responsibility of East Sussex County Council (ESCC). Councillor Gray was advised to report her concerns to her County Councillor. Members requested that a copy of ESCC's routine street tree maintenance programme be obtained.

ACTION 4: To obtain a copy of East Sussex County Council's routine street tree maintenance programme. (Climate Projects Officer)

CCSG24/14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- To celebrate the Council's 50 years of public service (the emblem was an oak tree), Councillor Gray advised that she had been given some oak seedlings and suggested that they be planted at a suitable location(s) near the Town Hall or in Bexhill. Two sites were suggested either / or the pedestrian area (middle of the road) opposite Warburtons Pet and Garden Centre, Station Road and Ninfield Road, entrance to Bexhill. Alternative suggestions were welcome. Tree planting on street verges would require East Sussex County Council (ESCC) approval, plus maintenance responsibilities would need to be sought.
- Councillor Gray expressed her concern regarding the increased volume of traffic (particularly large heavy goods vehicles) that were driving through her Ward, Bexhill Old Town (High Street). She agreed that sat-nav was partially to blame. Councillor Gray was advised to contact her ESCC Councillor or establish a petition to introduce traffic calming / safety measures in that location. She explained that she would like to see more pedestrian areas within Bexhill, e.g. Western Road, Devonshire Road (one-way system) and introduce more trees in these locations.
- Concern was raised that the Council still did not have a dedicated Tree Officer in post in the Planning Department. As a result of climate change, it was considered important that resources were in place to support the district's protected trees. It was understood that funding had been secured from the digital improvement fund to upgrade the Council's Tree Preservation Order data. The Chair agreed to speak to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning regarding this issue.
- Upgrading Council-owned properties to EPC Grade 'C' or above and other properties across the district: It was difficult to upgrade Grade II Listed properties with decarbonisation products. The Climate Projects Officer advised that all Council-owned properties would either be purchased with an EPC 'C' grade or would be upgraded to achieve this. Retrofitting guidance was available on the Council's website. It was important that the Council promoted its retrofitting objectives / actions, however there was limited resources to do this. Promotion could be delivered at the Rother Association of Local Councils Annual Parish Assembly. It was agreed that promotion should be delayed until the Council's new Local Plan had been adopted.
- It was clarified that all Village Hall Energy Project grants had been approved. Most projects had been completed, e.g. solar panels installed at Sedlescombe Village Hall. However, some were still in progress.

CCSG24/15. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next “formal” meeting would be held on Thursday 31 October 2024 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:18pm

CCSG240926jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28 November 2024

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 28 November 2024 at 2:04pm.

Members of the Steering Group Present: Councillors K.M. Field (Chair), S. Burton, Mrs V. Cook, P.J. Gray, T.M. Killeen (MBE) and P.N. Osborne.

Other Members Present: Councillor S.M. Prochak (in part).

Advisory Officers Present: Chief Executive, Head of Neighbourhood Services (in part), Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG24/25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Anna Evett.

CCSG24/26. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations noted.

CCSG24/27. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 31 OCTOBER 2024 – MATTERS ARISING

Members considered the list of actions from the last meeting, and the following was confirmed / noted:

- **Action 3:** That the Repair, Reuse and Recycling Grant Scheme be promoted at the Annual Parish Conference. Councillor Burton confirmed that this action had been completed.
- **Action 4:** That advice be sought from the Planning Department regarding Biodiversity Net Gain data and an appropriate time to report this to the Climate Change Steering Group be identified. This action was still ongoing.

The following matter arising was also discussed:

Minute Ref CCSG24/21, bullet point (6) – *waste management was the only sector in Rother which rose from the previous year (+39%). This was a local trend across the county, with all other local authorities reporting a rise in emissions. Clarity was sought on this situation. Members would be kept updated.* No update was available. It was anticipated that with the introduction of food waste collections in 2026, the Council’s carbon emissions could / would increase. The Waste Contractor’s vehicles would be using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO)

as fuel, if affordable, therefore it was hoped that emissions would reduce. A general discussion ensued on HVO; would it be purchased in the UK or abroad and how this could affect the Council's overall carbon emissions? Details were unknown.

Members referred to some of the actions from the 26 September 2024 meeting, and the following were confirmed / noted:

- **Action 2:** To raise / promote the profile of climate champions at the Rother Association of Local Council's (RALC) Annual Parish Conference. It was confirmed that this action had not been completed. It would be raised with RALC to promote at their next scheduled meeting.
- **Action 4:** To obtain a copy of East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) routine street tree maintenance programme. It was confirmed that this action was still ongoing. The Climate Projects Officer was encouraged to contact Kate Cole, ESCC Ecologist.

ACTION 1: To raise / promote the profile of climate champions at the next scheduled RALC meeting. (Chief Executive / Climate Projects Officer)

CCSG24/28. **USE OF PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES AND PEAT IN THE COUNCIL'S GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Parks Development Officer which updated Members on the introduction of a policy to eliminate the use of pesticides, herbicides and peat in the Council's ground maintenance (Objective 4.1. of the Council's Climate Action Plan).

A new 5-year Grounds Maintenance Contract (with extension opportunities) was scheduled to commence on 1 December 2024 with idverde, which no longer included the maintenance of sports pitches and seasonal bedding. The outgoing contract made provision for the application of herbicides to hard surfaces to reduce weed growth damage. This provision was not included in the new contract on a routine basis, but it was expected that some herbicide application would be requested on an ad-hoc basis, subject to funding. The work would be kept to a minimum; a consequence of this could be an untidier public realm appearance.

All seasonal bedding plants would be grown in a peat-free medium. The quantity of bedding had reduced with provision restricted to three war memorial locations and a small quantity in Manor Gardens, Bexhill.

Due to budgetary restrictions, weed management would be dealt with by the application of herbicides rather than hand weeding, which was much more expensive. This could result in an increase in the use of herbicides. The exception to this would be West Parade, Egerton Park and Manor Gardens, Bexhill.

It was anticipated that the sports clubs might continue to use herbicides for weed management. Environmentally friendly practices would be

promoted and encouraged, wherever possible. It was important not to restrict the clubs' abilities to operate on a financially sustainable basis.

It was important to realise that there could / would be consequences of discontinued weed management in hard surfaces and planted areas resulting in visual, safety and degradation of infrastructure, usability of play areas, reduction in the diversity of cultivated plants and potentially an increase in customer complaints.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- The changing climate could / would influence weed diversity, establishment and management; additional treatments might be essential.
- Priority would be given to playground areas for safety reasons e.g. reduce trip hazards etc.
- Clarity was sought on how other neighbouring authorities had dealt with weed management. Bedding areas had been grassed over and alternative weed management methods used e.g. foam / jet washing. These methods were extremely expensive.
- Spot spraying was an alternative weed control management method.
- Pavement weed management was the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.
- Important to re-educate the public on alternative weed management methods without using herbicides / pesticides. A cut lawn / landscape was aesthetically pleasing; however, it could encourage pest growth. Nature was naturally untidy. What was pleasing to one would not be pleasing to another (views would vary).
- The new contract would be reactive rather than proactive; important to closely monitor the new contract (over the first year) to understand all issues experienced and review the level of complaints received, if any.

CCSG24/29. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – NOVEMBER 2024

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – November 2024. It was noted that some projects had not yet started. The following objectives / actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Buildings and Energy Efficiency – Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- Use Environmental Health Enforcement Mechanisms to Improve Private-Sector Rented Accommodation: Once a disrepair enquiry was received, the level of EPC was assessed and if appropriate enforcement action undertaken; to date no appropriate enforcement action had been necessary.
- Train Energy Champions to Work with Communities: A training session was held on 28 November 2024 (second cohort). To date five members of the public across Rother had been fully trained; the aim was to train up to 10 people.

- Fund Businesses' Decarbonisation Plans with Capital Grants for Net Zero Infrastructure: Two Workshops were scheduled to be held on 4 December 2024 – Sustainability Storytelling, in Battle and 29 January 2025 – Your Sustainability Journey, in Rye. It was clarified that Clean Growth UK led on the promotion of these events. More events were available on their website at the following link: [Events Archive - Clean Growth UK](#)

Transport – Objective 2.3 A Programme of Activities to Promote Active Travel Across the District:

- Climate Awareness Training introduced for all Council staff: The latest course was held on 25 and 26 November 2024. It was anticipated that a Member training session would be held in the new year. Councillor Burton suggested an alternative training source at the following link: [Climate Fresk \(world\) – Climate Fresk](#)

Resource Consumption and Waste – Objective 3.1 Reduced Consumption of Resources and Waste:

- Improve Procurement Policies for Operational Resources: The East Sussex Procurement Hub (ESPH) Working Group would be reviewing the new Sustainable Procurement Policy. The CPO was a member of the ESPH.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.1 Halt Land and Marine Species Decline:

- Eliminate Use of Pesticides, Herbicides and Peat in Council Grounds Maintenance: See Minute Ref CCSG24/28.

Biodiversity and Land Use – Objective 4.2 Increase Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration:

- Adopt the County-side Local Nature Recovery Strategy: A table of draft measures was shared with stakeholders on 8 November 2024 for review and comments by 22 November 2024.

CCSG24/30. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (Climate Emergency Bonus Fund): Clarity was sought on how much funding was available. Information was not available at the meeting. Advice would be sought from the Principal Community Infrastructure Levy Officer.
- It was clarified that environmental / climate emergency issues were embedded across the Council. One of the Council's key objectives in the Council Plan was 'Green to the Core'. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services would be leading on this.
- All good news stories to be promoted regularly. Communications was a key function and came under the remit of the Head of Corporate and Strategic Services. It was anticipated that Communications would significantly improve.
- Sustainable Events Policy: To investigate other local authorities' policies / what are they doing?
- Councillor Gray advised that she had recently attended two fascinating environmental talks: Rother Environment Group on

Pevensey Levels (potentially hosting an open day next summer) and Bexhill Environment Group on Sussex Underwater (marine conservation from Brighton to Bexhill).

- Battle Memorial Hall (solar panels): It was understood that the roof was not structurally stable to support solar panels. An alternative option was suggested, namely ground mounted solar panels. It was understood that there was not enough free-standing land surrounding the building for solar panels to be ground mounted.
- Battle Abbey Car Park: Electric Vehicle Charging Points were being installed in the car park.

ACTION 2: Advice be sought from the Principal Community Infrastructure Levy Officer on the Climate Emergency Bonus Fund. (Climate Projects Officer)

CCSG24/31. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the date of the next “informal” meeting would be held on Thursday 30 January 2024 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:56pm

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