

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 –
(3) MATTERS ARISING**

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 re-opened 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 –
(3) MATTERS ARISING**

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 shown 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

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