

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28 May 2025

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Wednesday 28 May 2025 at 2:00pm.

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

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate and Strategic Services and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG25/01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Elize Manning, Climate Projects Officer.

CCSG25/02. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/03. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 24 APRIL 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

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

- **Action 1:** To investigate tree planting opportunities through Rother Community Lottery winnings. As the Climate Projects Officer (CPO) was not in attendance, the outcome of this action was unknown at this stage. The CPO to update at the next meeting.
- **Action 2:** An update of the Rother Tree Management Plan (including Bexhill Tree Management Plan) to be presented at a future meeting. Advice had been sought from the Head of Neighbourhood Services and an update on the Rother Tree Management Plan would be presented at a future meeting (date to be agreed). Councillor Gray advised that Rother Environmental Group would be conducting a tree survey exercise on behalf of Trees for Cities to check the condition of the trees planted in Bexhill.
- **Action 3:** Members to note the dates in their diaries and MS Teams invitations to be forwarded. This action was completed.
- **Action 4:** To forward link of the Local Authority National Recycling Results (2023) to the Chair of the Climate Change Steering Group and Climate Projects Officer. This action was completed.

There were no other matters discussed.

ACTION 1: To investigate tree planting opportunities through Rother Community Lottery winnings – update to be provided at the next meeting. (Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/04. **RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS IN ROTHER - PRESENTATION**

Unfortunately, both representatives from Energise Sussex Coast (Churchill Utomi and Richard Watson) failed to attend the meeting. It was agreed that this item be deferred until the next or a suitable future meeting.

ACTION 2: That the Renewable Energy Projects Presentation be deferred until the next or a suitable future meeting. (Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/05. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – ENERGY GENERATION – MAY 2025**

The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – May 2025, which specifically focused on objective – Energy Generation. The following actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Objective 5.1 Solar Photovoltaics (PV) on all suitable roof spaces:

- 5.1.1 Participate in collective buying schemes such as Solar Together: The Partnership (led by West Sussex County Council) supported an inter-authority agreement for the tender process, which was expected to begin shortly.
- 5.1.2 Encourage businesses to install Solar PV: Grants awarded to Nice Work for solar-powered generators and Skinners of Rye for solar panels. It was pleasing to note that overall, five businesses had received grants for solar products. The Council would continue to promote grant funding, where appropriate.
- 5.1.3 New Local Plan – support community energy through policy: The Council's emerging Local Plan had been subject to public consultation. Its policies would be developed further prior to Planning Inspectorate examination. Details of the Council's programme for preparing the new Local Plan were available at the following link: [Local Development Scheme – Rother District Council](#).
- 5.1.4 Support local community renewable energy creation: Solar arrays installed by Energise South (ES) at Tilling Green Community Centre and Pebsham Community Hub (supported by Village Halls Energy Project grant funding). The Council was also supporting the installation of an array by ES to Egerton Park Indoor Bowls Club.
- 5.1.5 Install Solar PV on Rother District Council (RDC) commercial assets: This action was on the work plan of the Asset Management Team.
- 5.1.6 Install Solar PV on Council owned accommodation: It was agreed that this action should remain as "in progress".
- 5.1.7 Consider RDC investment opportunities for renewables: Appointed an Estate Surveyor to review all RDC assets.

- 5.1.8 Explore options for solar carports in RDC car parks: A meeting was held on 20 May 2025 with ES to discuss community energy solar carports. As the Climate Projects Officer (CPO) was not in attendance, she would be asked to provide an update at the next meeting.

Objective 5.2 Support renewable energy generation:

- 5.2.3 Explore district heating opportunities across the district: This project was scheduled to start at the end of the financial year.
- 5.2.4 Support feasibility studies for geothermal heat networks: In April, the CPO attended a geothermal energy presentation by Kieran Mullen, MP at Rother Environmental Group meeting. Additional advice was sought from Cornwall Council who had provided some high-level information. Going forward, this would be pursued at County level (strategic action) in response to private sector interest.
- 5.2.5 Carry out heat demand mapping: In April, it was announced that National Energy System Operator would develop Regional Energy Strategic Plans, which sat between national plans and local energy plans. This project was behind schedule, however in the meantime, the CPO would be exploring other opportunities.
- 5.2.6 Encourage businesses to install renewables: Some grants were issued for solar (see 5.1.2 above), but no other renewable technologies were applied for.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Members agreed that it was important to publicise all “good news” stories / projects on all Council social media platforms.

ACTION 3: Action 5.1.8 – Solar Carports in RDC car parks – the Climate Projects Officer to provide an update at the next meeting. (Climate Projects Officer).

ACTION 4: “Good news” stories / projects to be publicised on all Council social media platforms. (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services / Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/06. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business item was discussed:

- Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Rother District Council car parks – no formal information was available at the meeting. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services advised that progress had been made, and it was still anticipated that the project would be completed by the required deadline.

CCSG25/07. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next “informal” meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:18pm

CCSG250528jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

25 June 2025

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 2:00pm.

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

Other Members Present: Councillor J. Barnes (MBE).

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate and Strategic Services, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG25/08. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. Burton.

CCSG25/09. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/10. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 28 MAY 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

Minute Reference CCSG25/03: **Action 2:** An update of the Rother Tree Management Plan (including Bexhill Tree Management Plan) to be presented at a future meeting. Advice had been sought from the Head of Neighbourhood Services and an update on the Rother Tree Management Plan would be presented at a future meeting (date to be agreed). Councillor Gray advised that Trees for Cities would be conducting a tree survey exercise to check the condition of the trees planted in Bexhill.

Correction to the Minutes: Councillor Gray advised that Bexhill Environmental Group would be conducting the tree survey exercise on behalf of Trees for Cities.

The Climate Projects Officer advised that an update on the Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy would be presented at the meeting scheduled to be held on Thursday 30 October 2025.

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

- **Action 1:** To investigate tree planting opportunities through Rother Community Lottery winnings. The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) advised that she had spoken to the appropriate officers, who had confirmed that this option was not possible. Lottery winners could request that their winnings be donated to charities that were registered with the Lottery Company only.

There were no other matters discussed.

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

CCSG25/11. **CLIMATE EMERGENCY UK SCORECARDS 2025**

On 17 June 2025, Climate Emergency UK released the 2025 Council Climate Action Scorecards. The Scorecards assessed all UK councils on the actions taken towards net zero emissions. Since 2023, the methodology had been improved and amended to ensure that the Scorecards were relevant, accurate and useful for residents and councils.

Since 2023, increased scores had been realised across all sections except for Transport. The average total score across all UK district councils had risen by 6% (from 29% to 35%). The Council's score had significantly increased by 30% points (from 19% to 49%) and was now ranked 9th out of 51 district councils; this had exceeded all expectations. This was attributed to the refreshment and adoption of the Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan, as well as other initiatives implemented, i.e. recording and reducing organisation emissions; CAST carbon and co-benefits assessment tool; and "Green to the Core" pillar in the Council Plan etc. Details of the Scorecards for all 51 district councils in the South East was included in Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that Wealden District Council was 6th on the list.

The Council had scored 62% in the Governance and Finance Section, compared to the average score of 31%. However, the lowest score was Transport (-4%), compared to the average score of 15%. The Council had failed to score points, which related to an electric vehicle fleet; shared transport scheme; and expansion of public network of electric vehicle chargers.

Members were pleased to note the Council's significant improvement (the most improved authority across the whole of the country) and movement from 50th to 9th position in the South East. Congratulations and thanks were extended to the Climate Projects Officer (CPO) and team, plus officers across the authority for their hard work in achieving this excellent score for the Council.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- How could improvements to the Council's Transport score be achieved? One suggestion was including the number of registered

electric vehicles (EV) in the district. The CPO advised that this information did not form part of the scores.

- The installation of EV charging points at the Town Hall was still to be delivered. Once completed, this would count towards the Council's score.
- The Council was scheduled to launch a discount platform called [easit](#) to incentivise / encourage employees to use sustainable methods (public transport and car sharing) for travelling to and from work etc. The CPO advised that staff benefit schemes were not included. The scheme would have to cover the whole of the district for it to apply, plus there had been limited uptake by other local authorities.
- It was clarified that credits for the flexibus would be awarded to East Sussex County Council (not Rother District Council).
- Councillor Gray advised that she had recently attended a Rother Environmental Group meeting where sustainable transport had been discussed. EVs were not as environmentally friendly as people thought (batteries were not recyclable). People should be steered towards using public transport, walking or cycle to work schemes.
- The way forward was alternative green options e.g. steam powered vehicles.
- To provide support to Rother Association of Local Council's campaign to reduce the average national speed limit (40 mph) on unclassified roads and jointly lobby the Local Government Association. Would this be cost-effective or too expensive?
- Cycling was a cleaner, healthier alternative to using motorised vehicles, therefore it was important to ensure that roads were safe and pothole free.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG25/12. **HOMEWISE – VERBAL UPDATE**

As part of the Council's ambition to become net zero by 2030, in April 2025, a free Homewise Tool (2-year licence) in association with Energy Saving Trust (EST) had been launched. The tool enabled residents to save money on energy and ultimately reduce their carbon footprint.

Residents could provide relevant information on their homes and energy consumption to discover how their home was performing, plus it created personalised plans on what measures could be undertaken to make homes more energy efficient.

A dedicated page had been created on the Council's website [Tailored energy advice for your home - Homewise](#). The scheme had been promoted / advertised via the Council's social media platforms and 'MyAlerts'.

The Climate Projects Officer advised that the Council had been allocated a dedicated EST Accounts Manager. Usage and effectiveness of the scheme would be monitored and reported at a future meeting.

ACTION 2: To receive an update report on the Homewise Tool at a future meeting. (Climate Projects Officer)

CCSG25/13. **LONGBRIDGE BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN LAUNCH – VERBAL UPDATE**

The Climate Projects Officer advised that she had recently attended a Biodiversity Open Event at Longbridge Farm (LF), Polegate. LF was situated in the Low Weald and was improving biodiversity across its land, plus selling units for profit. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) project proposed to enhance the landscape in alignment with local environmental policies and Low Weald National Character Area guidelines. Information on the project could be found on the following website link: [BNG - Biodiversity Net Gain Units - Longbridge](#). The event had enabled officers to network and source relevant information on the processes involved and how the system worked.

LF was diversifying to make farming relevant to today's society. It had planted a nuttery (nut trees) and was motivated to manage the land to ensure water quality was retained.

The Property Investment and Regeneration Manager and team would be assessing the Council's open green spaces to ascertain their suitability for BNG units. Selling units to developers had the potential to restore, improve, enhance and establish the Council's species-rich grasslands and native woodlands, ensuring longevity. Ecologists at East Sussex County Council would be supporting officers with this work.

BNG unit prices would vary dependent on the habitat. Wetland areas demanded a higher price, as this land was not desirable to developers. Grassland was more desirable as it was developable; therefore, units would be cheaper to purchase.

The whole process was complex and complicated. Members would be kept abreast of developments.

CCSG25/14. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – BUILDINGS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY – JUNE 2025**

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the refreshed Climate Action Plan Progress Report – June 2025, which specifically focused on objective – Buildings and Energy Efficiency. The following actions had been updated since the last meeting:

Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- 1.1.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms and networks and provide information on Rother District Council (RDC) webpages on retrofit and decarbonisation of private housing: Homewise Tool was launched in April 2025 (see Minute CCSG25/12 above).
- 1.1.2 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes for retrofit of private housing, where funding is available, either stand-alone or in partnership: The Council was part of a consortium partnership with other local authorities (led by Wealden District Council) to fund energy upgrades and low carbon heating systems to low-income households living in the worst quality,

- privately rented homes. The scheme was expected to be three to five years in length and commenced in April 2025.
- 1.1.3 Participate in relevant retrofit groups (such as Sussex Energy and East Sussex Energy Partnership [ESEP]) and respond to relevant consultations. ESEP was led by East Sussex County Council. Environmental Health officers represented the Council and ensured that the Council's needs were taken into consideration.
 - 1.1.6 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes for retrofit of commercial and community buildings, where funding is available, either stand-alone or in partnership: The Council's Community Grant Scheme was currently going through a transition period and was scheduled to go live by September 2025.
 - 1.1.8 Participate in relevant groups to develop the local retrofit skills, such as Rother Employment and Skills forum, and participate in Public Health's East Sussex Housing Retrofit Strategy design: The CPO and Environmental Health officers had attended the first two East Sussex Retrofit Design Workshops. In April 2025, the CPO had attended the inaugural Skills Forum.
 - 1.1.15 Deliver Carbon Literacy training to all RDC staff: To date, 120 staff had received training.
 - 1.1.16 Apply Policy SRM1 (Sustainable Resource Management – Towards a Low Carbon Future) to planning applications to extend existing buildings: Established Council policies already applied.
 - 1.1.17 Set enhanced refurbishment energy standards in the Emerging Local Plan: The [Local Development Scheme](#) was formally approved in March 2025.
 - 1.1.18 Support reuse of buildings rather than demolition in the Emerging Local Plan: See 1.1.17 above.

Objective 1.2 New Buildings are Net Zero or Carbon Negative:

- 1.2.1 Require best practice net zero standards for new buildings in the Emerging Local Plan: See 1.1.17 above.

It was noted that Actions 1.1.11, 1.1.12, 1.1.13, 1.1.14 and 1.2.3 were still to be reviewed with the relevant Head of Service (HoS).

During the discussion the following was noted:

- It was clarified that HoS were receptive to the Climate Action Plan review meetings held with the Head of Corporate and Strategic Services and CPO. They were keen to ensure that environmental issues were incorporated / embedded in all procedures and policies at the Council.
- The following annual reports would be considered at the October 2025 meeting: Rother District Council Organisational Emissions Report 2024-25; Rother District Annual Emissions Report 2005 – 2022; plus, an update of the Climate Action Plan Summary – which set out each project, including outcomes.
- To lobby the Local Government Association (LGA) to improve building standards regarding water conservation methods (e.g. grey water recycling systems). The Chair confirmed that she would be

attending the LGA's Annual Conference and would raise the issue then.

- Government UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Specifically targeted green projects e.g. purchase of water butts.
- Members were advised of a new Carbon Literacy course – a free two-year Groundworks Water Literacy. The CPO advised that she and several of the planning officers had signed up to complete the course.

ACTION 3: To raise grey water recycling systems at the LGA Conference. (Chair of the Climate Change Steering Group)

CCSG25/15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The following any other business items were discussed:

- It was clarified that both Battle and Ticehurst Pavilions had installed solar panels and grey water recycling systems.
- Suggestion: to explore prefabricated solar roofs (rather than the installation of solar panels); these would be suitable for pavilion structures.
- Members requested an update on the Council's wildflower planting scheme in Bexhill. The Head of Neighbourhood Services to provide an update at a future meeting. The CPO to liaise with the Head of Neighbourhood Services.
- Suggestion: As water was becoming a precious commodity, to promote the use of water recycling on 'MyAlerts', encourage residents to purchase and install water butts within their gardens.
- Reduced toilet flushing could help to reduce water consumption and contribute towards preservation.

The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services announced that the Council had been awarded the Bronze Carbon Literacy Trophy. It was suggested that an official presentation be made at the next full Council meeting scheduled to be held on 14 July 2025; advice would be sought from the Chief Executive. The Council would now be applying for the Silver Award.

ACTION 4: To receive a Bexhill wildflower planting scheme update. (Head of Neighbourhood Services / Climate Projects Officer)

ACTION 5: To seek advice from the Chief Executive regarding a presentation of the Bronze Carbon Literacy Trophy at the next full Council meeting, scheduled to be held on 14 July 2025. (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services)

CCSG25/16. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the date of the next "informal" meeting would be held on Thursday 31 July 2025 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:51pm

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

31 July 2025

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 31 July 2025 at 2:00pm.

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

Other Members Present: Councillors J. Barnes (MBE), N.H. McLaren and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate and Strategic Services, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG25/17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T.M. Killeen (MBE).

CCSG25/18. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/19. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 25 JUNE 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

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

- **Action 1:** Minutes to be amended accordingly. It was confirmed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 May 2025 regarding Action 1 had been amended accordingly.
- **Action 2:** To receive an update report on the Homewise Tool at a future meeting. This would be actioned, as and when required.
- **Action 3:** To raise grey water recycling systems at the Local Government Association (LGA) Conference. The Chair confirmed that she had raised this issue at the LGA Conference, and it was agreed that grey water systems should be included within primary legislation. It was suggested that both local MPs be lobbied to raise the issue in Central Government.
- **Action 4:** To receive a Bexhill wildflower planting scheme update. Councillor Gray advised that she had suggested to officers several

locations across Bexhill to plant wildflower beds. Two areas had been identified and approved by officers, namely along Little Common Road, by The Downs (on the edge) and Galley Hill. Bexhill Environment Group and Bexhill Friends of The Down had volunteered to clear these grassed areas and sow the wildflower seeds. Members were advised that autumn was the ideal time to do this. Planting a wildflower bed at the Town Hall would be raised with the Head of Neighbourhood Services. It was agreed that wildflower beds / borders were attractive and attracted many different varieties of wildlife. Installing information boards at these locations explaining the wildflower planting schemes was thought to be a good idea.

Frustration / disappointment was re-aired regarding the current planting scheme along Marina, Bexhill.

It was suggested that a Rother District wildflower planting scheme be promoted on the Council's website; show current planting schemes that had been established across the district. Information would need to be collated from East Sussex County Council, parish and town councils, local environment and community groups.

The Climate Projects Officer reminded Members that maintaining wildflower planting schemes was no longer included within the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract.

- **Action 5:** To seek advice from the Chief Executive regarding a presentation of the Bronze Carbon Literacy Trophy at the next full Council meeting, scheduled to be held on 14 July 2025. It was confirmed that the Chair of the Council had announced the award during his communications at the full Council meeting.

Regarding Minute Ref: CCSG25/15 – *“it was clarified that both Battle and Ticehurst Pavilions had installed solar panels and grey water recycling systems.”* Councillor Burton advised, that as far as she was aware neither solar panels or a grey water recycling system had been installed at Battle Pavilion as it was still under construction.

There were no other matters discussed.

ACTION 1: Lobby both local MPs to raise the issue of grey water legislation in Central Government (Members of the Climate Change Steering Group).

ACTION 2: To raise planting a wildflower bed at the Town Hall with the Head of Neighbourhood Services (Councillor Gray / Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

ACTION 3: To promote the district's wildflower planting schemes on the Council's website (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services / Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/20. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL STAFF BENEFITS (EASIT AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES) – UPDATE

The Climate Projects Officer advised that cabling for Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) had been installed in the Town Hall Car Park (outside the new staff recreational area), however the charge points themselves had not yet been installed. The Council's Insurance Company was questioning the location of the EVCP's, and whether it should be located at least 10m away from the nearest building. It was understood that East Sussex County Council had also experienced this issue with the same Insurance Company. They had completed a risk assessment, which had reassured their Insurance Company that the location of the charge points was acceptable and safe. The Council would complete the same exercise and submit a risk assessment. Once approval was received, the project would be finalised and staff advised. The EVCPs were low voltage fast chargers, where staff could charge their vehicles (for free) for up to six hours during the day. After implementation and several months of usage, the scheme would be reviewed. If usage was popular, a booking system would be applied. This was a staff benefit only and not for the public to charge their vehicles. Questions were raised, as to whether this was a taxable benefit for staff. Information was not available at the meeting.

The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services advised that an EV leasing scheme for staff was currently being progressed.

Members were also advised that the Council was scheduled to launch a discount platform called [easit](#) Network, to incentivise / encourage staff to use sustainable methods (public transport and car sharing) for travelling to and from work etc. Staff could purchase a £5.00 per annum discount card which would allow them to get immediate discounts on e.g. Southern Trains, Halfords, Brighton and Hove Buses etc., plus many more. The scheme was being launched next week to coincide with National Cycle to Work Day (7 August 2025). Easit also provided access to a car sharing platform, allowing officers to identify internal and external colleagues with whom they might be able to share their commute. The Climate Change Steering Group was extremely supportive of the scheme and hoped that staff took full advantage of the discounts on offer.

Members felt that it was important to promote both schemes as good news stories. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services agreed to speak to the Communications Team, so that suitable press release(s) could be prepared and released on the Council's website and social media platforms.

ACTION 4: To speak to Communications Team regarding a press release on the new staff benefit schemes (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

CCSG25/21. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2030

Members considered the refreshed Climate Action Plan (CAP). The five objectives remained the same, namely: Buildings and Energy Efficiency; Transport; Resource Consumption and Waste; Biodiversity and Land Use; and Energy Generation. Each action was also allocated to a specific Service Area and responsibility laid with the relevant Head of Service (HoS). All actions were now standardised across the whole document. Some actions were repetitive and supported multiple areas across several objectives. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services and Climate Projects Officer (CPO) were holding individual quarterly meetings to review the actions within the CAP with each HoS. The CAP was a working document that was continuously being updated / amended.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Clarity was sought on the storage facilities for the Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel that would be kept at the Council's Waste Depot. Details were not known at the meeting. Advice would be sought from the Head of Neighbourhood Services.
- Disappointment was aired that sustainable building products, e.g. solar panels and / or eco-friendly heating systems, were not being installed within the new housing development at North East Bexhill. The CPO advised that a centralised heating network (one source) was being installed, which would heat all houses on the estate. It was also understood that solar panel wiring was being installed, so that owners could choose to install solar panels, if they wished.
- It was clarified that HoS were receptive and fully engaged with the Objectives (actions) contained within the CAP. The quarterly meetings focused minds, with additional actions being proposed by HoS to be incorporated within the CAP.

ACTION 5: To seek advice from the Head of Neighbourhood Services regarding the storage of HVO fuel at the Council's Waste Depot (Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/22. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – TRANSPORT – JULY 2025

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – July 2025, which specifically focused on objective – Transport. It was noted that many of the actions related to the emerging Local Plan and were reliant on relevant policies being adopted as part of that process. The following actions had been updated since 1 April 2025:

Objective 2.1 Sustainable forms of transport are supported through the planning system:

- 2.1.1 Participate in relevant groups that support sustainable transport, including local and regional transport partnerships, and respond to relevant consultations: The CPO had attended meetings of the Local Plan Managers Group and NHS and East Sussex College Group. In June 2025, consultation responses were

- submitted to the new Freight Strategy and updated Rail Strategy.
- 2.1.2 Development Strategy to plan spatially to reduce reliance on personal vehicles through town and village networks and clusters in the emerging Local Plan: Adoption of the Council's Local Plan was scheduled for 2027/28.
- 2.1.3 Live Well Locally concept to be an overall priority, informing the spatial strategy, site selection and development design in the emerging Local Plan: See 2.1.2 above.

Objective 2.2 Facilitate the transition to low/zero carbon vehicles:

- 2.2.2 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes where funding is available, to encourage take up of Electric Vehicles (EV) by residents: Solar and EV charging points schemes were currently out to tender and it was anticipated that the schemes would be launched by the end of the year. Projects led by West Sussex County Council for all Sussex districts and boroughs. It was understood that Government funding was being made available to the public to purchase EVs.
- 2.2.3 Use On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) funding to install EV charging infrastructure in Council owned public car parks: ORCS funding had been extended until 1 December 2025. Contract was still to be agreed with the provider.
- 2.2.6 Encourage and incentivise the taxi trade to increase the availability of electric and hybrid vehicles through the taxi policy: Full hybrid/EV Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles maximum age limited increased to 15 years (standard vehicles 10 years). Of the 165 taxi fleet, 50 vehicles were hybrid/EV (higher than expected), of which three had been added to the fleet since 1 April 2025.
- 2.2.7 Install EV charging infrastructure for fleet and staff vehicles: EV charging points were purchased and cabling installed at the Town Hall. Awaiting direction from the Insurance provider.
- 2.2.10 Switch refuse vehicles to low carbon fuel through Joint Waste Contract renewal in 2026/27: On schedule to commence in June 2026.
- 2.2.13 Promote existing staff benefits and seek to enhance these where possible: Public transport and EV lease schemes were in progress.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- It was noted that no actions had been listed for Objective 2.3: A programme of activities to promote active travel across the district. This was an oversight (the page had been missed off the bottom of the report) and a copy of the actions would be forwarded to the Climate Change Steering Group.
- It was suggested that the Council explored the opportunity of operating a hydrogen taxi fleet.
- New energy efficiency measures / carbon reduction opportunities were being explored, e.g. installing a water butt in the Town Hall car park, EV fleet for the Council's Maintenance Team etc.

- Parcel / Postage Lockers: Convenient facilities to send and return parcels; these facilities should be located in both urban and rural areas across the district.
- EVCPs had been installed at Etchingham Railway Station (funded by a Community Interest Company).
- Hydrogen fuel vehicles were more desirable than EVs. More information on Hydrogen vehicles was requested by Members. The CPO agreed to seek information from [Hydrogen Sussex - Greater Brighton](#) and that an update be delivered at a future meeting. It was thought that expertise could be sourced from University of Sussex (advice would need to be sought from East Sussex County Council).

ACTION 6: To forward a copy of actions listed under Objective 2.3 to the Climate Change Steering Group (Climate Projects Officer).

ACTION 7: To receive an update on hydrogen vehicles at a future meeting (Climate Projects Officer).

CCSG25/23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- An update on the Trees for Cities Bexhill Survey would be provided at the next meeting.
- It was important that officers used the Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool when evaluating projects / writing reports. It was clarified that this tool was embedded within the Council's procedures and was being used, where and when appropriate.
- Progress was sought on Planning Application RR/2023/1201/P, installation of a Solar Farm at Swainham Lane, Crowhurst. Advice would need to be sought from the Head of Planning.
- Staff Commuter Survey: At present, staff were being asked to complete a Commuter Survey to ascertain how they travel to and from work. The survey was scheduled to close on 5 September. The results would be used to monitor the Council's commuting carbon footprint and would be incorporated within the Rother District Council Annual Emissions Report, which was scheduled to be reported to the Climate Change Steering Group at the October meeting.

ACTION 8: An updated on the Trees for Cities Bexhill Survey would be delivered at the next meeting (Councillor Gray).

CCSG25/24. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next "formal" meeting would be held on Thursday 25 September 2025 at 2pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:55pm

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

6 November 2025

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 6 November 2025 at 2:00pm.

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

Other Members Present: Councillor S.M. Prochak (MBE).

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

Also present: Shelley Pletsch, Groundwork South (in part).

CCSG25/35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CCSG25/36. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/37. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 25 SEPTEMBER 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

Members considered the action from the last meeting, and the following was confirmed / noted:

- **Action 1:** To promote the Coronation Community Orchard Grants to the parish and town councils and local community groups. It was confirmed that this action had been completed.

There were no other matters discussed.

CCSG25/38. RESILIENCE IN RARE BEE SPECIES PROJECT

The Chair welcomed Shelley Pletsch from Groundwork South to the meeting, who briefed Members on a proposed Resilience in Rare Bee Species project within Rother District. The following key information was noted:

- A preliminary funding bid was submitted to Natural England on 2 November 2025 under the Species Recovery Grant Scheme (SRGS). If successful, a full application would follow.
- The SRGS Programme targeted efforts to recover the UK's most endangered species.
- The proposed project was modelled on a similar initiative that Groundwork South had carried out in Hastings. It aimed to enhance the resilience of rare bee species in Rother by creating and improving habitats suitable for oak mining, tormentil mining, long-horned and brown-banded carder bees. This included diversifying wildflower meadows, enhancing woodland edges, restoring and planting hedgerows, and improving amenity grasslands for foraging.
- The project aligned with the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and biodiversity net gain requirements.
- Eight rare bee species unique to Rother had been identified and 25 sites would be assessed as part of the project.
- Funding was anticipated by March 2026.

Members would be kept updated on progress.

CCSG25/39. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL EMISSIONS REPORT 2024-25

Consideration was given to the report of the Climate Projects Officer on the latest data of the Council's annual organisational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 March 2025, in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (TCO₂e). The report outlined annual 2024-25 data in comparison to the previous year and the Council's 2019-20 baseline. The following key highlights were noted:

- The Council's direct emissions were 116.17 TCO₂e, which was similar to the previous year (115.78 TCO₂e). The largest source of direct emissions was electricity (48.87 TCO₂e), gas heating (39.73 TCO₂e) and diesel used by fleet vehicles and plant machinery (27.57 TCO₂e).
- After deductions were applied from the supply of 100% renewable electricity and the export of solar energy, net direct emissions were 36.84 TCO₂e which was an increase of 75% compared to the previous year (21 TCO₂e).
- From the baseline year of 2019-20, the Council's net direct emissions had dropped by 81.25%, which was attributed to reduced electricity usage, adopting a 100% renewable energy contract, and the ongoing decarbonisation of the grid. Despite this significant progress, net direct emissions exceeded the 2024-25 key performance indicator by 30.7 TCO₂e.
- Including indirect emissions, the Council's total emissions were 1,372.04 TCO₂e. The joint waste contract continued to be the largest contributor, which made up 56% of the total (770.39 TCO₂e). The next greatest source of emissions was leisure centres (27%) and staff commuting (7%). Net direct emissions made up 3% of the Council's total emissions.

- Total emissions showed an increase of 2% (+27.71 TCO₂e) compared to the previous year, with a reduction of 17% (-273.58 TCO₂e) since the baseline year.
- Further savings were expected because of devolved assets, building closures, upgraded utility and energy efficiency facilities within the Town Hall / Amherst Road buildings, Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Swimming Pool, and renewal of the joint waste contract with the introduction of hydro-treated vegetable oil from June 2026. However, with the introduction of weekly food waste collections from March 2026, the mileage of the waste fleet would increase which could affect these savings.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- It was clarified that the 2% emissions increase would not impact the Council's Climate Emergency UK Scorecard rating.
- A succinct, engaging press release was requested to highlight the Council's 80% reduction in carbon emissions.
- Clarification was requested regarding the consideration of an E-bike scheme for staff. The Chair confirmed that although Councillor Thomas had previously conducted extensive research into such a scheme, it was ultimately not supported during the procurement process. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services confirmed that these matters were addressed during quarterly meetings with relevant Heads of Service. A staff benefits scheme was available.
- A comprehensive communications strategy would be launched to inform residents about the upcoming food waste collection service.
- Councillor Gray reported that East Sussex County Council's proposed cycle route through Bexhill (across The Down) to the seafront had been delayed / stalled.

ACTION 1: Prepare and issue a succinct, engaging press release highlighting the Council's 80% reduction in carbon emissions (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

CCSG25/40. **2023 ROTHER DISTRICT-WIDE EMISSIONS**

In July 2025, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) published the latest greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data by local authority area, covering the period from 2005 to 2023. The key highlights and following was raised:

- In 2023, Rother's district-wide GHG emissions were 378.3 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (ktCO₂e).
- Transport remained the largest emitting sector at 43% of the district's emissions, followed by domestic sector at 33.2%, and agriculture and industry at 17.3% each.
- The district continued to benefit from higher than average emissions from Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) compared to the rest of the South East region.
- Between 2022 and 2023, Rother's emissions dropped by 8%, with reductions in every sector and sequestration LULUCF remaining

stable. This decrease was greater than the average decrease seen both across East Sussex (-5.5%) and the UK (-4.4%).

- From the Council's baseline year of 2019, Rother's emissions had dropped by 17.7%, with decreases across all sectors. This decrease was less than that seen across East Sussex over the same period (-21.9%), which was slightly higher than the UK average (-16.7%).
- Between 2018 and 2022, Rother stayed within its carbon budget of two megatonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO₂), however, the district had spent one third of the 2023-27 budget within the first year.

During the discussion the following comment was made:

- The Council should actively promote carbon reduction and healthy lifestyle initiatives, including car sharing, public transport use, walking to school, and participation in 'Active Rother' programmes. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services confirmed that an 'Age Friendly' Member Briefing was scheduled to be delivered on Thursday 20 November 2025.

CCSG25/41. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS IN 2024-25

The Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted in December 2023, outlined the Council's approach to reducing emissions across five key areas: Buildings and Energy Efficiency; Transport; Resource Consumption and Waste; Biodiversity; and Energy Generation. The Climate Projects Officer's (CPO) report summarised progress made between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 against the objectives and actions set out in the CAP, as follows:

Buildings and Efficiency

- Government funding was awarded (joint local authority initiative) to decarbonise private housing e.g. improve energy performance and heating systems in low-income households and privately rented homes in East Sussex.
- Encouraged parish and town councils to declare a climate emergency and develop local action plans.
- Supported the development of local retrofit skills.
- Funded energy efficiency measures for community assets and businesses.

Transport

- Worked with partners to shape transport policy e.g. responded to Transport Strategy consultation and monitoring air quality.
- Supported community groups and businesses to install electric vehicle charging points in their car parks for staff and visitors.
- Encouraged residents to switch to electric vehicles.
- The Council had achieved Silver Carbon Literate status.

Resource Consumption and Waste

- Encouraged reduced waste and increased re-use and recycling of resources e.g. grants awarded to introduce reusable cup deposit/return and community food waste composting schemes.

- Promoted waste reduction initiatives and sustainable food practices across the district.
- Reviewed and improved the Council's decision and procurement processes.

Biodiversity and Land Use

- Supported partners to improve health of water environments and land management practices.
- Audited and improved Council owned land for nature.

Energy Generation

- Funded community groups and business to install solar panels.
- Supported community energy projects.
- Supported partners to explore heat demand mapping opportunities.

The CPO was commended for the clarity and quality of the report, and for her contributions throughout the year. Details of the report were being uploaded to the Council's website.

CCSG25/42. FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS ROLL OUT

The Climate Projects Officer updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the forthcoming food waste collection service, scheduled to start week commencing 30 March 2026, in line with national requirements. The following key information was noted:

- Each household would receive an internal food caddy, one year's supply of biodegradable caddy liners, and an external food waste bin.
- Flats with five or more dwellings, would be provided with a shared 140 litre external wheelie bin for residents to share.
- Food waste must be bagged in liners; bins containing unbagged waste would not be collected.
- Existing general, recycling and garden waste services would continue unchanged, including daily collections in Bexhill Town Centre.
- The contract with Biffa was being finalised, based on an estimated yield of 1.5kg of food waste per dwelling per week.
- Round details had been provided; fuel usage and emissions data were pending.
- Food waste would be deposited at the Pebsham Waste Transfer Station (PWTS).
- The fleet would transition to hydro-treated vegetable oil fuel in June 2026.
- Comprehensive resident communications materials had been drafted and would be circulated following formal approval.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- An opt-out option was not available.
- Food waste from the district would initially be deposited at the PWTS before being transported to the Woodlands In-Vessel Composting Facility in Whitesmith.

- Residents should be encouraged to compost food waste at home.
- Concerns were raised about the potential for uncollected food waste attracting vermin.
- Concerns were expressed regarding how non-compliance would be managed.

CCSG25/43. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – RESOURCE CONSUMPTION AND WASTE – OCTOBER 2025

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – October 2025, which specifically focused on objective – Resource Consumption and Waste. Actions had been updated, as follows:

Objective 3.1 Reduced consumption of resources and waste:

- 3.1.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to reduce domestic waste: Earth Day, Great Big Green Week, and plastic free July had been promoted on Eco Tips (see 3.2.1 below).
- 3.1.2 Promote Rother Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Grant to fund community initiatives: First round of Community Grant Scheme (CGS) (Sussex Foundation) opened on 31 October 2025. 55 applications received; all would be assessed and funding allocated where CGS criteria was met.
- 3.1.3 Introduce residential food waste collections: Scheduled to begin week commencing 30 March 2026.
- 3.1.4 Introduce “Simpler Recycling” scheme: Commercial waste already collected. Domestic waste collection to commence in March 2026 which required recyclable materials to be collected separately. Biffa would continue to co-mingle until the end of the current contract in 2033. Tetra Pak materials would be collected from April 2026.
- 3.1.5 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to encourage sustainable food practices by residents: Internal posts promoting sustainable food were published in June 2025. [Sussex Six](#) campaign was launched in September 2025; promoted shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes to use local produce. Unfortunately, the CPO had not been invited to the launch event.
- 3.1.6 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to reduce commercial waste: The CPO delivered a presentation at Rother Voluntary Action’s Connections Event in April 2025.
- 3.1.8 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to encourage sustainable food practices by businesses and organisations: (see 3.1.5 above).
- 3.1.13 Deliver Carbon Literacy training to all Council officers: Silver Carbon Literate Organisational Status achieved; now on target to achieve Gold Status. To date 104 officers were certified.
- 3.1.17 Require reuse and recycling of construction materials and waste in the emerging Local Plan: Public consultation completed, and policies would be further developed prior to submission to Planning Inspectorate. Also included actions 3.1.18 and 3.1.19.

Objective 3.2 Increased repair, reuse and recycling of goods and materials:

- 3.2.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to increase repair, reuse and recycling of goods: Rye repair café, World Refill Day, and Earth Overshoot Day promoted on Eco Tips (see 3.1.1 above).
- 3.2.3 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to increase grey water harvesting: Energise South's Energy and Water Bill advice session and hosepipe restriction information promoted on Eco Tips.
- 3.2.5 Introduce glass collection from operational buildings: Introduced in July 2025.
- 3.2.6 Promote initiatives and events through internal comms to increase repair, reuse and recycling of goods: Promoted in July 2025, launch of new staff area which included recycling (glass, batteries, soft plastic) and book swap facilities, and Earth Overshoot Day posts.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Town Hall Waste Audit had been completed – results to be collated and shared.
- Green Team Notice Board would be installed in the staff area.
- Annual Staff Clothes Swap Event to be organised. A successful event was held in September, featuring primarily women's clothing, along with a selection of men's and children's items, shoes, hats, and accessories.
- Foil lined plastics would need to be deposited at supermarket recycling facilities.
- Plastic toothpaste tubes were recyclable.
- Encourage recycling of electrical items.
- It was proposed that high-quality weekly climate action press releases be issued. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services agreed to liaise with the Communications Team.

ACTION 2: To liaise with the Communications Team regarding high - quality weekly climate action press releases (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

CCSG25/44. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Disappointment was expressed over the withdrawal of On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme funding for electric vehicle chargepoints in the Council's car parks. Although the project completion deadline had been extended to March 2026, the appointed contractor had confirmed they could not meet the revised timeline due to legal complications. Alternative funding sources were now being explored to progress the project. An update would be provided at the next meeting.
- The Chair advised that the Nature Emergency Declaration had not yet been discussed with the Leader of the Council or Cabinet

Members, and she would follow up with Councillors Killeen and Prochak after the meeting.

- Tree repairs by Trees for Cities remained outstanding.
- Eight commemorative silver birch trees were scheduled to be planted on The Down, Bexhill, subject to space availability.
- Wildflower beds had been planted at The Down, Bexhill (300m) and Galley Hill (40m).

ACTION 3: To update Members on progress of the electric vehicle chargepoints in the Council's car parks project at the next scheduled meeting (Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

CCSG25/45. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next "informal" meeting would be held on Thursday 27 November 2025 at 2:00pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:16pm

CCSG251106jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

27 November 2025

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 27 November 2025 at 2:00pm.

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

Other Members Present: Councillors J. Barnes (MBE) (in part) and S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate and Strategic Services, Climate Projects Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Richard Watson and Churchill Utomi, Energise Sussex Coast (in part).

CCSG25/46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

CCSG25/47. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

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

Burton	Agenda Item 4 – Non-Registerable Interest as she had been involved in the discussions regarding the Battle Solar Town Project.
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There were no dispensations noted.

CCSG25/48. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 6 NOVEMBER 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

Two corrections to the Minutes were agreed:

- Minute Reference CCSG25/39 – Councillor Gray reported that East Sussex County Council’s proposed e-cycle route through Bexhill (across The Down) to the seafront had been delayed / stalled – amend to cycle.
- Minute Reference CCSG25/44 – Wildflower beds had been planted at The Down, Bexhill (300m) and Galley Hill (400m) – amend to 40m.

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

- **Action 1:** Prepare and issue a succinct, engaging press release highlighting the Council's 80% reduction in carbon emissions. It was confirmed that this action was still outstanding. A draft press release had been prepared and would be published following approval and appropriate scheduling.
- **Action 2:** To liaise with the Communications Team regarding high – quality weekly climate action press releases. The Head of Corporate and Strategic Services confirmed that she had scheduled a meeting with the Communications Officer to discuss / plan weekly climate action press releases, subject to scheduling availability. It was clarified that climate action updates were distributed through the Council's weekly 'MyAlerts' email service for residents and businesses. Social media content was managed by the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Communications Team, based on information provided by officers. Preparing weekly press releases would significantly increase the Climate Projects Officer's (CPO) workload. To manage resources effectively, the Climate Change Steering Group should consider reviewing the current schedule of 10 meetings per year and potentially reduce the amount for 2026/27, as necessary.
- **Action 3:** To update Members on progress of the electric vehicle chargepoints in the Council's car parks project at the next scheduled meeting. The CPO reported that the ESCC contract was expected to be awarded by month-end which would allow for further conversations and she would keep Members updated on progress.

There were no other matters discussed.

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

ACTION 2: To consider reducing the number of Climate Change Steering Group meetings for 2026/27 (Members of the Climate Change Steering Group / Head of Corporate and Strategic Services).

CCSG25/49. RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS IN ROTHER

The Chair welcomed Richard Watson and Churchill Utomi from Energise Sussex Coast (ESC) to the meeting, who briefed Members on several renewable energy projects which had been launched in Rother, as follows:

- **Belmont Project:** An award-winning solar retrofit for 36 sheltered flats to reduce energy costs.
- **Crowhurst Community Solar Farm:** A construction (potentially timber framed) covering 10 hectares, financed from community shares, supplying 2,000 homes per year. Investors would receive 5% annual dividend over 25 years, with any surplus reinvested locally. Biodiversity would be enhanced through wildflower and tree planting. A 5MWh battery would provide flexibility and replicability. Scheduled to be built within the next 12/18 months.
- **Neighbourhood Microgrid:** 323kW solar panels installed on the roof of Egerton Park Indoor Bowling Club. Excess power to supply Bexhill

Museum and other sites. Included LED lighting, heat pump, air conditioning system and electric vehicle charge points.

- **Battle Solar Town** (pilot scheme): Target was to install solar panels on 600 buildings generating 25% of the town's electricity, including two large solar carports. Partnership with Southern Housing (375 homes). Battle Memorial Hall converted to resilience hub with solar panels, batteries and heat pumps. Model designed for replication elsewhere.
- **Solar Carports**: Partnered with Flexi-solar. Offered a full range of roof and ground mounted solar panels and carports. Could be used to provide energy for leisure centres (potential to save 75% of energy costs). Potential to use locally sourced timber for enhanced sustainability and aesthetic appeal.
- **Future Projects**: Establish a Community Land Trust to deliver affordable, modular homes capable of generating up to 80% of their own energy. Designed for flood-prone areas and sustainable housing solutions.
- **Fairer Warmth**: A mobile app and personalised energy platform to help residents manage energy use. In 2024, 9,700 residents received energy advice from Energise South, saving an average of £365 per household. Fuel vouchers were also provided. The app was currently in soft launch and would be fully rolled out in 2026.

Founded in 2012, Energise Sussex Coast was a community benefit co-operative dedicated to addressing the climate crisis and energy inequality through locally owned renewable energy and efficiency initiatives. Initiated school solar energy co-operative projects within the district e.g. Battle and Langton CE Primary and Glenleigh Park Primary Academy, Bexhill. Additional information on Energise Sussex Coast's projects, including contact details for Richard Watson and Churchill Utomi, was available on their website: [Energise Sussex Coast](#).

During the discussion the following comments were made and noted:

- Energy-efficient solutions, such as solar panels, delivered developers significant cost-saving benefits.
- It was felt that Council-owned land at Beeching Road was suitable as a potential site to deliver low-cost affordable modular housing.
- Energy-efficient products should be incorporated within the Rother DC Housing Company's Blackfriars, Battle development.
- Members were advised that voltage regulation was essential for grid stability.
- Energise Sussex Coast was recruiting Solar Champions (training provided) to support local energy initiatives by hosting stalls and events and providing advice.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Burton declared a Non-Registerable Interest in this matter in so far as she had been involved in the discussions regarding the Battle Solar Town project and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof.)

CCSG25/50. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – ENERGY GENERATION – NOVEMBER 2025

The Climate Projects Officer (CPO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – November 2025, which specifically focused on objective – Energy Generation. Actions had been updated, as follows:

Objective 5.1 Solar PV on all suitable Roof Spaces:

- 5.1.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms and networks and Council webpages to increase rooftop Solar PV generation: The website was being updated to include a dedicated page on solar panels.
- 5.1.2 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes where funding is available to encourage rooftop solar, either stand-alone or in partnership: West Sussex County Council was leading on the development of a group purchase scheme for solar panels and electric vehicle charge points across all Sussex local authorities.
- 5.1.3 Promote and support local community energy opportunities: (see Minute Ref CCSG25/48).
- 5.1.5 Review feasibility and costs for solar carports on Council owned land: Community Energy model would be explored.

Objective 5.2 Support Renewable Energy Generation:

- 5.2.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to increase renewable energy generation: The website was being updated to include a dedicated page on heat pumps.
- 5.2.3 Participate in relevant groups to progress heat demand mapping and responds to relevant consultations: The CPO had attended the inaugural Sussex Energy Forum on 9 July 2025. She and Planning officers met with GSENH regarding NESO's request for strategic investment data. No information was provided at this stage; further detail would be submitted in the Council's next annual return.
- 5.2.5 Through the Strategic Asset Management Plan for Open Spaces (SAMPOS), review the Council owned assets for renewable potential, for example wind or solar farms: The SAMPOS had delivered a high-level review of open spaces.
- 5.2.6 Support community energy in the Emerging Local Plan: The Local Plan (2020-2040) had completed initial public consultation and would undergo further development before examination by the Planning Inspectorate. Adoption was scheduled for Quarter 3 2027/28. The next milestone was a site allocation public consultation scheduled for Quarter 4 2025/26.
- 5.2.7 Spatially plan for renewable energy in the Emerging Local Plan: (see 5.2.6 above).
- 5.2.8 Support connection to district heat networks in the Emerging Local Plan: (see 5.2.6 above).

During the discussion the following was noted:

- Modular homes were designed with energy efficient products e.g. solar panels, heat source pumps etc.

- It was suggested that solar panels be fitted to the Town Hall and Villa roofs. The CPO confirmed that this option had been considered / assessed and deemed unsuitable due to limited space and poor orientation.
- Installing a solar carport at the Town Hall could generate renewable electricity; however, this was unlikely to proceed / be considered due to the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation.
- It was suggested that modular housing be constructed above the Town Hall Car Park.

CCSG25/51. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Clarity was sought on whether pesticides had been eliminated from the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Climate Projects Officer confirmed that pesticides had been largely phased out but remained necessary for controlling weeds in high-density areas.
- A Nature Recovery Motion had been submitted to the Chief Executive for consideration.
- It was understood that Rother DC Housing Company was preparing a sustainability study.

CCSG25/52. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next "informal" meeting would be held on Thursday 29 January 2026 at 2:00pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:16pm

CCSG251127jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

29 January 2026

Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 29 January 2026 at 2:00pm.

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

Other Members Present: Councillor S.M. Prochak (MBE).

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services, Climate Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Rebecca McCaig – Housing Retrofit Manager, Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council (in part).

CCSG25/53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P.N. Osborne.

CCSG25/54. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/55. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 27 NOVEMBER 2025 – MATTERS ARISING

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

- **Action 1:** Minutes to be amended accordingly. It was confirmed that this action had been completed.
- **Action 2:** To consider reducing the number of Climate Change Steering Group meetings for 2026/27. It was agreed that meeting frequency would be reduced from 10 to six per year to allow more time to progress actions. Meetings would be held on the last Thursday of January, March, May and July (Wednesday due to Planning Committee meeting being held on Thursday), September and November, with March’s and November’s meetings held in public, starting at 2:00pm via MS Teams.

POST MEETING UPDATE: To align with the presentation of annual reports at webcast meetings, it was proposed that formal meetings be held in May and November.

The meeting dates for 2026 / 2027 were confirmed as follows:
27 May 2026 (Wednesday – formal webcast live)
29 July 2026 (Wednesday)
24 September 2026
26 November 2026 (formal – webcast live)
28 January 2027
25 March 2027

The following other matters were discussed:

- The Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services confirmed that pesticides had been largely phased out of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract and were now used only sparingly in exceptional cases. The forthcoming Pesticide Policy would reflect this, and a draft had been received.
- Clarity was requested on the progress of the sustainability study being undertaken by Rother DC Housing Company. Progress would be sought.

ACTION 1: Members to note the meeting dates in their diaries and MS Teams invitations to be forwarded. (Members of the Climate Change Steering Group / Democratic Services Officer).

ACTION 2: To update Members on progress of the sustainability study being undertaken by Rother DC Housing Company. (Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services / Climate Officer).

CCSG25/56. **WARM HOMES GRANT UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Rebecca McCaig, Housing Retrofit Manager from Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council to the meeting, who updated Members on the Warm Homes Local Grant – Private Homes Project, as follows:

- The 3-year project was led by Lewes District Council in partnership with Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden local authorities.
- The Partnership had received an additional £800,000, totalling £4.8m, to deliver 102 homes by March 2026.
- Wealden would be using Osborne Energy; other authorities would use Retrofit Works.
- Supported Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) D-G households and EPC F-G private rentals required registered exemptions.
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Income: Under £36,000 or below the equivalised “after housing costs” threshold.
 - Proxies: On a qualified means-tested benefit or met ECO4 Flex Route 2.9.
 - Wealden: Only Indices of Multiple Deprivation postcodes accepted.
- Energy performance upgrades and low-carbon heating installations were each capped at £15,000 (opportunity to apply for both).

- 78 homes approved with works underway; high referral levels, and planning had begun for year two and private rented sector activity.
- The following risks and issues had been identified:
 - Limited budget: expectations must be managed carefully.
 - Previous external and internal wall installation failures had caused concern.
 - PV battery installations paused pending approved MCS Product Standards.

During the discussion, the following comments were made and noted:

- The scheme was promoted through local councils, Citizens Advice, East Sussex Warm Homes Check Service, Energise Sussex Coast, and Hastings Fuel Poverty Co-ordinator, with postcards delivered to eligible households across the Partnership.
- Communications were co-ordinated across the Partnership and targeted only at eligible households. Once the waiting list backlog had been cleared, further communications would begin.
- Managing residents' expectations of project delivery remained important.
- East Sussex Warm Homes Check Service completed all eligibility checks; however, some households might still be found ineligible.
- Trusted, legitimate contractors were used to complete the works.

CCSG25/57. UPDATE ON THE PAN-SUSSEX DOMESTIC SOLAR PV GROUP PURCHASE SCHEME PROCUREMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on progress of the Pan-Sussex Domestic Solar PV Group Purchase Scheme (DSPVGPS) Procurement, following the conclusion of the previous "Solar Together Scheme".

Between 2019 and 2023, the Council worked with all Sussex authorities, led by West Sussex County Council, to deliver Solar Together Sussex (iChoosr), a group-purchase scheme for domestic solar PV and battery installations.

Across three rounds, the scheme delivered 2,511 solar installations (128 in Rother), including 101 with battery storage, generating over £1m in private investment to support local decarbonisation and energy security.

In March 2024, the Partnership recommended continuing a domestic solar PV offer for residents and small and medium sized enterprises, with potential expansion to electric vehicle charge points, heat pumps and other technologies. Details were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

The initial tender, launched in May 2025, received six responses but was abandoned due to flaws in the assessment criteria. After revisions, a new tender / specification process was planned, with contract award expected in March / April 2026 and service launch later in the year.

It was not yet clear whether all partners would be required to pay marketing costs under the new scheme. These costs would be defined

in an inter-authority agreement (IAA) that the Council intended to sign, provided they were comparable to or lower than those of the previous scheme and recouped through delivery of the scheme. Terms were included in the IAA to account for potential Local Government Reorganisation affecting any partner.

Building on the previous scheme's success, the Council supported a partnership approach to procure a new DSPVGPS for Sussex in 2026.

During the discussion, the following comments were made and noted:

- A local contractor was initially preferred, but due to the scale of the project, a national contractor was probably more suitable.
- Last week, the Government had published the Warm Homes Plan 2026, offering low or interest free loans to help households install green energy measures. This might pose a risk to the Pan-Sussex scheme, as residents might delay applications while they considered potential benefits from the new national programme. Investigations would be ongoing.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CCSG25/58. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – BUILDINGS AND ENERGY GENERATION – JANUARY 2026

The Climate Officer (CO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – January 2026, which specifically focused on objective – Buildings and Energy Generation. Actions had been updated, as follows:

Objective 1.1 Mass Retrofit of Existing Buildings:

- 1.1.4 Promote initiatives and events through comms and networks and provide information on Rother District Council (RDC) webpages on retrofit and decarbonisation of private housing: Homewise Tool (reminder), Sussex Energise Coast's Energy and Water Efficiency Drop-in, Pebsham (December 2025), and Waterwise water saving tips (January 2026) had been promoted on Eco Tips. "What you can do – Buildings and Energy Efficiency" webpage updated with links to energy and retrofit advice services, energy and water saving tips and advice for older homes.
- 1.1.5 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes for retrofit of private housing, where funding is available, either stand-alone or in partnership: In January 2026, East Sussex received an additional £880,000, doubling the scheme's budget. The programme was on track to complete 111 properties by March 2026, with 729 potential leads, 151 properties in progress, and 42 approved in batches. In November 2025, the Partnership held a well-attended private landlords' event in Eastbourne and was considering another in 2026.
- 1.1.6 Participate in relevant retrofit groups (such as Sussex Energy and East Sussex Energy Partnership [ESEP]) and respond to relevant consultations: The CO attended the Sussex Energy

Forum on 9 July 2025. The CO and Planning Officers met with GSENZH regarding the NESO information request; a nil return was submitted, with further details to follow in the next annual return. The CO and Environmental Health Officers (EHO) represented RDC at the East Sussex Housing Retrofit Programme workshops. The CO sat on the Communication, Collaboration and Co-benefits subgroup, and EHO attended the quarterly ESEP.

- 1.1.7 Improve private-sector rented accommodation through Environmental Health engagement and enforcement: Two cases were completed with improvements achieved through engagement.
- 1.1.8 Promote initiatives and events through comms and networks and provide information on RDC webpages on retrofit and decarbonisation of commercial and community buildings: Green Growth Awards and grants were promoted in the November Business Alerts. Climate Directory members were contacted in December 2025 to encourage applications to the 2026 RDC Community Grants Scheme. Parish and Town Councils were routinely invited to apply to the Climate Emergency Bonus Fund (CEBF).
- 1.1.9 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes for retrofit of commercial and community buildings, where funding is available, either stand-alone or in partnership: The first round of the Community Grant Scheme awarded c£34,000 for energy efficiency projects. Specialise 25, led by East Sussex County Council offered business growth advice, including sustainability training. A sustainable rooftop garden business from Robertsbridge had applied.
- 1.1.10 Participate in relevant groups to develop the local retrofit skills, such as Rother Employment and Skills forum, and participate in Public Health's East Sussex Housing Retrofit Strategy design: The CO and EHOs attended Retrofit Design Workshops. The CO served on the Strategy Comms, Collaboration and Co-Benefits Subgroup. The Housing Retrofit Strategy was expected in early 2026.
- 1.1.10 Review EPC ratings of Council owned operational buildings and identify retrofit requirements to meet EPC C and Net Zero: All buildings were rated EPC C or above. This did not apply to unheated assets, such as toilets or the Colonnade.
- 1.1.11 Retrofit Council owned operational buildings to EPC C and Net Zero: The upgraded Camber Welcome Centre was rated EPC A.
- 1.1.14 Deliver Carbon Literacy training to all Council officers: 122 staff had received training, with 97 accredited and four pending. Silver status was achieved in September 2025. Additional courses scheduled for February and May 2026. The Council was expected to achieve "Gold Standard" by year end and congratulations were extended to the CO for delivering the training.

Objective 1.2 New Buildings are Net Zero or Carbon Negative:

- 1.2.2 Promote the Community Infrastructure Levy (CELF) and award funding to relevant stakeholder projects: Two applications had been submitted.
- 1.2.3 Introduce Council-led Development Policy: As part of the procurement process, the Corporate Development Team (CDT) considered net-zero standards. The new Procurement Act 2023 also required additional information to be gathered during contracting. CDT was working with the Procurement Hub to update the Procurement and Contracting Procedure Rules for Council adoption.

During the discussion, the following was noted:

- Members were encouraged to use the Homewise Tool (see 1.1.1 above), which could be found on the Council's website at the following link: [Tailored energy advice for your home - Homewise](#). An easy-to-follow self-assessment tool which all residents should be encouraged to complete.
- A parish and town council Carbon Literacy Toolkit was available and could be delivered by the CO, subject to resource and capacity, as it was a time-intensive training resource. Advice would need to be sought.

ACTION 3: To seek advice on whether Carbon Literacy training could be delivered to the parish and town councils by the Climate Officer (Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services).

CCSG25/59. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- On Saturday 24 January 2026, the Council had paid for and planted six standard trees near the Athletics Centre, Bexhill.
- Combe Valley Community Nature Project: Planting a Micro Wood on 2 and 3 February 2026 at Bulverhythe Recreation Ground, 10:30am to 3:00pm (weather permitting). Volunteers required.
- North East Bexhill (Vistry Development) / Bexhill Old Town and Worsham Ward: The site included a rare Communal Air Source Heat Pump, one of only three in the country, which was the size of a football pitch. It supplied heating and hot water for up to 800 homes. Members of the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) and Council Green Team were encouraged to visit the site, and the Council was advised to publicise this rare green initiative.
- Asian Hornet (Yellow Legged): An invasive species in the UK that threatened honeybees, which could kill up to 50 per day. Sightings should be reported to UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at the following website: [Non-native Alert - Asian Hornet](#). Information on the Asian Hornet had also been uploaded to the Council's website: [Advice on bees – Rother District Council](#).
- Two Micro Woods at Barrack Hall Park and De Moleyns Close would be created using underspent Community Orchard funds, with DEFRA

approval. Accessible pathways would also be incorporated, where required.

- Warm Homes Plan: A two-page summary to be disseminated to the Members of the CCSG. It was hoped that the Future Homes Standards in the Warm Homes Plan would be incorporated within the Council's Local Plan.

ACTION 4: The Council to publicise the Communal Air Source Heat Pump (Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services).

ACTION 5: Warm Homes Plan summary to be disseminated to the Members of the Climate Change Steering Group (Climate Officer / Democratic Services).

CCSG25/60. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed and confirmed that the date of the next "informal" meeting would be held on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 2:00pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:53pm

CCSG260129jh

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

26 March 2026



Minutes of the Climate Change Steering Group “informal” meeting held remotely on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 2:00pm.

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

Advisory Officers Present: Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services, Climate Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

CCSG25/61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

CCSG25/62. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations noted.

CCSG25/63. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 29 JANUARY 2026 – MATTERS ARISING

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

- **Action 1:** Members to note the meeting dates in their diaries and MS Teams invitations to be forwarded. It was confirmed that this action had been completed.
- **Action 2:** To update Members on progress of the sustainability study being undertaken by Rother DC Housing Company (RDCHC). The Climate Officer (CO) reported that RDCHC was developing an internal Sustainability Policy, and a summary would be shared once finalised. The CO noted the importance of ensuring alignment with the Council’s Climate Strategy. The Chair had requested that grey-water measures be incorporated.
- **Action 3:** To seek advice on whether Carbon Literacy training could be delivered to the parish and town councils by the Climate Officer. The CO advised that once the Council had achieved “Gold Standard”, on-line training would be made available to the parish and town councils, subject to officer capacity. It was noted that any associated charges had yet to be determined.
- **Action 4:** The Council to publicise the Communal Air Source Heat Pump. Councillors and officers had attended a site visit on 23 February 2026 to The Gateway development in Bexhill-on-Sea, as referenced in the Vistry press release [East Sussex and Rother](#)

[District Councillors tour Vistry's Community Heat Hub, on track to provide low-carbon energy to 800 high-quality new homes in Bexhill-on-Sea | Vistry](#). Local newspapers published an article on the visit and, related updates were posted on social media.

- **Action 5:** Warm Homes Plan summary to be disseminated to the Members of the Climate Change Steering Group. It was confirmed that this action had been completed (emailed 5 February 2026).

The following other matter was discussed:

- Regarding Minute Ref: CCSG25/59 – “*On Saturday 24 January 2026, the Council had paid for and planted six standard trees near the Athletics Centre, Bexhill.*” It was clarified that although the Council had funded the purchase of the trees, volunteers from Bexhill Friends of the Down and Bexhill Environmental Group had assisted officers with the planting.

CCSG25/64. **BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORTING**

In accordance with the Biodiversity Duty (BD) under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2023 and Environment Act 2021, local authorities must consider and promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. In May 2023, the Government issued guidance on meeting BD requirements. Biodiversity was now a core component of the Council's Climate Strategy, updated in December 2023.

The Council must publish its BD report by 26 March 2026 and thereafter every five years, with the option to issue more frequent updates, if required. BD reports must include a summary of actions, compliance plans, and current and future measures to meet Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations, along with BNG outcomes.

Following a review of the guidance, the Corporate Leadership Team agreed to establish an officer-led Biodiversity Working Group to prepare the report, presented to the Climate Change Steering Group at this meeting, and subsequently published on the website. Future reports would be produced annually. The Council's BD report, covering the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025 was attached at Appendix 1, to the report.

Members considered the report to be clear, well-structured, and accessible.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Biodiversity Duty Report 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025 be uploaded to the Council's website.

CCSG25/65. **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – TRANSPORT – MARCH 2026**

The Climate Officer (CO) updated the Climate Change Steering Group on the Climate Action Plan Progress Report – March 2026, which

specifically focused on objective – Transport. Actions had been updated, as follows:

Objective 2.1 Sustainable forms of transport are supported through the planning system:

2.1.1 Participate in relevant groups that support sustainable transport, including local and regional transport partnerships, and respond to relevant consultations: The CO reported that she had discussed reinstating the Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group with her counterpart at Hastings Borough Council. Previous correspondence and the Terms of Reference would be reviewed as part of this process. Councillors and officers from both authorities were supportive of the Group's reinstatement, and Members would be kept updated on progress.

Objective 2.2 Facilitate the transition to low/zero carbon vehicles:

2.2.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to encourage take up of electric vehicles by residents: Information on Electric Vehicles from the Energy Saving Trust had been uploaded to the Council's website at the following link: [Transport – Rother District Council](#) (see 2.2.2 below).

2.2.2 Develop and deliver projects / grant schemes where funding is available, to encourage take up of Electric Vehicles (EV) by residents: A Solar and EV charging points scheme tender, led by West Sussex County Council for all Sussex authorities, was currently live. Contract award was anticipated by the end of May 2026.

2.2.5 Develop and deliver projects/grant schemes where funding is available to encourage take up of EVs by businesses and organisations, either standalone or in partnership: A £10,000 community grant was awarded to Bexhill Amateur Boxing Club in December 2025 to purchase an economical environmentally friendly minibus. In addition, a hybrid bus was procured through Levelling Up funding for the Sussex Outreach Community Hub to support community health services (see 2.2.2 above).

2.2.12 Pool electric bicycles made available for staff use: This project was currently unfeasible due to complexities relating to insurance and equipment requirements. Batteries were removable and could be charged within the office. Clarification would be sought on whether this constituted as a taxable benefit for staff. Staff could purchase E-bikes through the Council's Cycle to Work Scheme, which would be re-promoted to employees.

2.2.13 Promote existing staff benefits and seek to enhance these where possible: 24 officers had enrolled in the Easit Scheme, adopted in August 2025. The Green Team would be promoting the scheme to encourage greater participation.

Objective 2.3 A programme of activities to promote active travel across the district:

2.3.1 Promote initiatives and events through comms, networks and Council webpages to increase journeys by public transport and active travel: Cycle to Work Day and Cycle to School Week had

been promoted on Eco Tips. Information on beginners cycle tips, local cycle routes, 123 walks, Flexibus, Stagecoach, Bexhill Community Bus and Battle Area Community Transport Bus timetables, as well as EVs and Liftshare in East Sussex had been uploaded to the Council's website at the following link: [Transport – Rother District Council](#). The Bexhill Neighbourhood Board Regeneration Plan aimed to improve access at public transport locations and within the public realm. Community transport and promoting health through active travel remained key priorities.

- 2.3.2 Deliver Carbon Literacy training to all Council officers: "Silver Standard" achieved in September 2025. A total of 135 staff had completed the training, with 98 accredited and 17 awaiting accreditation. The next course, scheduled for May 2026, was fully booked.
- 2.3.3 Promote existing staff benefits and seek to enhance these where possible: One officer was enrolled in the Cycle to Work Scheme, 24 officers were active members of the Easit Scheme, and the 2024/25 Staff Community Survey reported a 50% increase in active travel commuting compared with the previous year. Case studies had been gathered and would be used by the Green Team to promote and encourage increased participation.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- EVCP installation in Council car parks remained a key priority. The Council continued to work with East Sussex County Council (ESCC), and the CO had met with ESCC's Contract Manager to discuss site requirements. Car park installations were considered more financially viable than on-street provision. Although the contract was not yet finalised, the minimum number of sites had been included, with capacity for up to 200 additional locations. Where infrastructure allowed, 22kW chargers would be preferred. In long stay car parks, 7kW chargers might be installed due to their 6-8 hours charging time. Faster units would only be installed where suitable electrical capacity existed. Clear signage would be essential to minimise bay blocking and ensure efficient use of charging bays.
- It was noted that several Action Plan deadlines extended beyond the date on which Rother District Council would be dissolved. The CO advised that, due to Local Government Reorganisation, projects requiring significant capital investment or unlikely to be delivered within the next 12 months would not proceed at this stage. However, these projects would remain in the Action Plan to ensure they could / would be considered by the new Unitary Authority.

ACTION 1: To determine whether charging staff pool E-bike batteries on Council premises constituted a taxable benefit and to re-promote the Cycle to Work Scheme (Head of Corporate, Strategic and Neighbourhood Services).

[POST MEETING UPDATE: Charging staff pool E-bike batteries on Council premises does not constitute a taxable benefit if the charging facilities were provided at or near the workplace and made available to

all employees. The exemption applies to the provision of charging facilities and electricity, but not to reimbursements for charging elsewhere paid for by the employee. This measure was part of the Government's initiative to encourage the use of cleaner, less polluting vehicles and support air quality initiatives.]

CCSG25/66. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following any other business items were discussed:

- Climate Emergency UK Scorecards: An assessment tool to evaluate actions taken by the Council in response to the climate emergency. The Climate Officer advised that the scorecard assessment system would change from 2027. Following Local Government Reorganisation, only county councils and one district council within the county would be assessed, meaning that Wealden District Council would be assessed alongside East Sussex County Council. This outcome was disappointing for Rother District Council, given its improved performance in the last assessment. However, the process was resource intensive, and the change would allow officer time to be directed to other priorities.
- National Emergency Briefing on Climate and Nature held on 27 November 2025: [National Emergency Briefing on climate & nature](#). Members were encouraged to watch this interesting briefing. A new film was scheduled for release on 7 April 2026.
- Community Orchards: Barrack Hall Park – 10 mixed trees and wildflowers had been planted, and a pathway installed. De Moleyns Close – five mixed trees had been planted.

CCSG25/67. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed and confirmed that the date of the next “formal” meeting would be held on Wednesday 27 May 2026 at 2:00pm.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 2:42pm

CCSG260326jh