

# Climate Advisory Committee

Notes of a Meeting of the Climate Advisory Committee held on the **8<sup>th</sup> December 2020**.

## Present:

### Borough Councillors

Cllr. Howard (Chairman);  
Cllr. Feacey (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Anckorn, Blanford, Campkin, Mulholland, Wright.

## Apology:

Head of Environment and Land Management.

## Also Present:

Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Senior Mechanical & Electrical Surveyor, Strategy and Policy Development Manager, Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 1. Declaration of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr. Feacey made a Voluntary Announcement, as he was on the Management Committee of UK LPG.
- 1.2 Cllr. Campkin made a Voluntary Announcement, as he was a Cllr for South Newtown and Willesborough Community Council.

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 3. Recovery Plan – Update on actions

- 3.1 The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications introduced this item and gave the Committee a progress update on the work undertaken since the last meeting in February. She gave a presentation that covered:
  - Road to a Green Recovery
  - The Ashford Ambition, including Green Principles and themes
  - Carbon Neutral Actions
  - Delivery, Monitoring and Review

- Next steps

3.2 The discussion was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised:

- A Member spoke about the need for new Cycling/Walking routes to be well thought out and communicated in order to avoid any mistakes similar to the KCC cycle routes that had been implemented (and since removed) in Ashford earlier in the year. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications agreed and confirmed that the Community Project Manager overseeing the project would be invited to speak at the next meeting.
- Givaudan, Brakes and William Harvey Hospital were amongst some of the major employers referred to in the presentation.
- A Member queried whether the team had enough resources and support to carry out the project. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications explained that the recruitment of the Strategy and Policy Development Manager had been hugely beneficial to the Team. The Committee considered that throughout the organisation it was imperative that all actions relating to climate within the recovery plan were for all departments and services to work toward. The concept of driving the message solely down the centre was not viable. The Chairman added that the actions needed to be embedded into the Councils culture and viewed on an equal footing alongside other corporate priorities.

3.3 The Head of Corporate Property and Projects then spoke to the Committee about solar energy. He said that predominantly within the Borough, Housing sites were selected for renewable energy and technology. Seventy sites were owned by the HRA, and three sites were owned by ABC; The Civic Centre, Godfrey House and Singleton Environment Centre. He went onto say that previously the Council had envisaged setting up a solar energy company, but when feed in tariffs began to fade away, this idea became difficult to bring to fruition. There were now a number of initiatives that were being explored; an example of one was at the Carlton Road depot, with the intention of the energy sourced then being fed back into the Aspire site offices, making them self-sufficient. Another site for consideration was Tenterden Leisure Centre and a fifty acre site at Blind Grooms Lane. The Head of Corporate Property and Projects finished by saying that the notion of renewable energy had to be embedded and considered at procurement stage.

3.4 The discussion was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised:

- A Member stressed how important it was that solar/renewable energy designs were contained within planning applications from the outset, and not later down the line when construction had already begun. A further suggestion was that Developers could also be encouraged to include electric charging points when at the planning stage and bulk purchase of solar panels.
- In response to a question about whether retrofitting fell under the control of the ABC Property Company, and subsequently provided jobs, the Head of Corporate Property and Projects explained that the scope of job roles fell under the Housing Department. The Portfolio Holder for Housing was exploring the current options in order to contribute to decarbonisation, but this was constrained by budget capacity.
- It was confirmed that village halls could be encouraged by the Council to fit solar arrays, but this would require extra resources.
- A Member enquired about the possibility of applying pressure on central government concerning Feed-in-Tariffs. He emphasised the significance of the main goal being to reduce carbon, with financial viability being a less important factor.
- The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications explained that housing stock did not form part of the seventy sites principally owned by the HRA. Furthermore, the HRA business plan was due before Cabinet soon. Funds would be put aside to undertake a stock survey, but there was no easy solution.

## **4. Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy**

- 4.1 The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications explained to the Committee that the Strategy had now been adopted by KCC. The priorities set out were similar to those of ABC, although the period was longer, extending to 2050. She added that endorsement by ABC was sensible.
- 4.2 A Member commented that the strategy seemed to focus heavily on growth, profit and the economy. The Chairman said that although it did not push as far as ABC's own policy, it did not contradict it either and ultimately could actually help the Council achieve their own targets. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications agreed that there were other areas for consideration that were not included in this strategy, including biodiversity and travel, but it would still prove useful as a broader plan.

## **5. Urban Tree Challenge**

- 5.1 The Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager gave a verbal update to the Committee on this topic. In September 2020 ABC secured funding for the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge (UTC). In total, 66,666 trees will be planted in Discovery Park at Chilmington Green. The tree species will include Elder, Beech, Birch and Wild Cherry, and the area will allow for connectivity to other sites. Planting began on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November and was expected to finish in February 2021.
- 5.2 The discussion was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised:
- In response to a question about planting style, it was confirmed that the Forestry Commission had issued strict criteria for how the trees were planted including height and in grid pattern.
  - A Member asked about the suitability of the terrain at Discovery Park. The Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager explained that the soil was arable, had been cultivated and would be mulched next year. The Contractor had placed subsoil down with mulch to suppress any weeds.
  - It was hoped that school children would be able to get involved with the planting for the second phase in January. Unfortunately, due to Covid and lockdown, they had not yet been allowed to be invited along.
  - A Member spoke about the cost vs benefit analysis and asked when the trees would reach maturity, and be at less risk from vandalism. It was confirmed that the tree guards could potentially be removed after 3 years, and the trees were expected to mature around 10 years.
  - A 10% failure rate was anticipated, and the Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager explained that a study further down the line would be undertaken to review the success of the planting and connectivity.

## **6 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme**

- 6.1 The Senior Mechanical & Electrical Surveyor introduced this item. He gave the Committee some background information and explained that Leisure-Energy (the contractor for the Stour Centre refurbishment) had introduced the scheme to the Council, which provided grants for public sector bodies to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures. The Council applied for a £1,534,429.81 grant through Salix Finance who were managing the Government scheme. Prior to the submission, the Council had funded £341,056 of plant replacement/repair works as part of the Stour Centre refurbishment. This would not be required and the full amount was going to be returned to ABC. There had been a £25k figure included in the grant application for a pool cover, which had been rejected by Salix. Therefore the £25k would be required to undertake that work, leaving the Council with a

£316,056 saving. It was possible that funding from the scheme could also be available for Tenterden Leisure Centre, and the Civic Centre.

6.2 The topic was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised:

- The Chairman asked whether the savings could be put towards reinstating the storage batteries at the Stour Centre. The Senior Mechanical & Electrical Surveyor said that this could be considered, although the site was already saving and the operator would reap the benefits through reductions in their utility bill. The Head of Corporate Property and Projects added that the benefits would be shared and the primary concern was lowering carbon levels. He added that further information on this would be sought and circulated to the Committee.
- A Member made a suggestion to promote the Green Home Grant via the corporate website.
- In response to a question asking whether the whole amount of scheme funding for the Stour Centre would be needed, it was confirmed it would be. In relation to the other sites, these had not yet been assessed and those applications were still in progress.
- A Member asked what the project completion date was anticipated to be and were they on target to meet this. The Head of Corporate Property and Projects explained that the works were on target to be completed, and they had already confirmed that the next election count will be held in the hall there, scheduled for May 2021.
- In response to a query around replacing the Civic Centre windows, it was confirmed that the grant incorporated window improvements and the building needed to be more energy efficient.

## **7 Community Municipal Investment**

7.1 The Strategy and Policy Development Manager spoke to the Committee about this item and explained that the Council were now seeking a worthwhile project for the investment.

7.2 The Committee deliberated potential sites, which included the Civic Centre, Julie Rose stadium, small industrial estates, parish village halls or housing stock. It was possible that ABC could collaborate with another local business to utilise the investment.

## **8 Measuring Carbon Emissions**

8.1 The Strategy and Policy Development Manager introduced this item. She made a presentation that included information on the Local Government

Association (LGA) tool kit, which was a carbon accounting tool used by other Local Authorities to establish baseline GHG emissions over a single reporting year for the Councils own estate. The presentation covered points including:

- Own estate
- Control boundaries
- What to include
- Scope 3 emissions

There were two methods that could be used to measure borough wide greenhouse gas emissions:

- BEIS Data set
- Scatter cities

8.2 The presentation was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised:

- The Chairman pointed out that these tool kits formed an important foundation on what the Council were doing, and were the crowbar to get people involved. He added that the BEIS data set seemed more consistent and would enable the public to see and measure the progress being made.
- The Strategy and Policy Development Manager confirmed that the BEIS method was supported by KCC and provided comparisons to other LAs and per capita calculation.

**Action: The Committee agreed to support the BEIS method of measuring carbon emissions.**

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services:

Telephone: 01233 330491 Email: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)

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