

# Climate Advisory Committee

Notes of a Meeting of the Climate Advisory Committee held on the **2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**.

## Present:

### Borough Councillors

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

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

## Apology:

Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager.

## Also Present:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Clokie, Harman, Ledger, Walder

Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications, Head of Environment & Land Management, Community Project Manager, Play & Open Spaces Project Officer, Strategy & Policy Development Manager, 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 Councillor for South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council.

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 3. Cycling & Walking Plan – Update

- 3.1 The Community Project Manager introduced this item and gave the Committee a progress update. ABC had approved the Cycling and Walking Strategy approximately 18 months ago, and the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) has also been approved by KCC and DfT but owing to the pandemic, it had unfortunately been slower in progressing. A LCWIP feasibility scheme was being developed, which incorporated routes

from Chilmington to South Ashford and Ward Members would be consulted in due course. Most work currently was around intervention, and pre-pandemic the focus had been upon encouraging local businesses to open at off peak times for cyclists and walkers along the proposed routes. A bid had been submitted to British Cycling for a new Pump Track at Victoria Park. Funding totalling £500k had been received from Department for Transport,

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

- The Chairman asked if there was any specific support that the Committee could assist with, in regards to moving the Strategy forward. The Community Project Manager suggested revisiting this in a few months, as the Strategy was currently still at the scoping stage. Support from Members would be sought when the time came to procure projects for the scheme.
- The site of the proposed Pump Track was confirmed as the existing bike track in Watercress Fields.
- A Member asked whether a bid had been submitted for the Active Travel Plan funding. KCC led on this funding, and it was explained that the Team were working on feasibility, since Ashford did not meet all of the original criteria. The outcome of this would be shared once the conclusion of the application was known.
- The Committee discussed the unsuccessful KCC pop up cycle route scheme that had been implemented in Ashford, and subsequently removed. The Community Project Manager said that ABC were not consulted in advance and Highways were swift to take out the bollards, which suggested they had quickly realised the scheme was not effective. He explained that the emphasis for the Cycling & Walking strategy was on modal shift and exploring routes that were more feasible.
- A Member spoke about the efforts being made in Tenterden to restrict the volume of cars. Waltham Forest was recommended as a good example where this system had worked.
- In response to a question about cycle storage, it was confirmed that this was already being considered for the pilot initiative. Signage, accessibility and pathways all needed to be fit for purpose for the scheme to be a success. A working group with KCC Highways had been formed and their scope included ecological, topographical and historical aspects within the strategy. A Member added that it could be beneficial to review footpaths as a shared space with cyclists, to avoid

encroaching onto road space.

- The Committee then turned their focus to the subject of electric vehicles and charging points, in particular in relation to new housing developments, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's), Town Centre planning and public transport. The Chairman highlighted that that the Carbon Neutral Action Plan also contained elements around planning and SPD's. The Parking, Highways & Transportation Team Leader was assembling a report, which included a proposal from KCC to work in partnership on this subject, and so it was recommended that she be invited to the next meeting to discuss this topic in more detail with the Committee.

## **4. Draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan**

- 4.1 The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications introduced this item. She explained that over the last 12 months the Plan had been reviewed, with some items having been removed and others becoming more defined. The Plan was now being costed with attention on resourcing and the Committee were asked if there had any comments about what was included, and ideas on improving it before it was submitted to Cabinet with recommendations and action points.
- 4.2 It was suggested that a walking bus scheme could be pursued, and this would tie in well with the initiative around reducing car usage. A further idea was made to approach KCC to enquire about clean, green public transport. The Chairman agreed that partnership working across the county was the way forward. A Member highlighted the need to be mindful of cost implications on the Council.
- 4.3 A Member spoke to the Committee about the Future Homes Standard. An amendment to the 2008 Climate Change Act, that removed the higher standards set for planning applications and replaced them with lesser standards in the Building Regulations Act was proposed by the coalition government in 2014. Most, but not all planning authorities followed this amendment, assuming it had become law. However, the Future Homes Consultation Document (ch. 2 paras. 23 – 30) made it clear that this amendment had not commenced, i.e. it never come into force. Currently there was nothing to stop planning departments from requiring the highest possible standards of sustainable building now. The Councillor had heard that there was a proposal for Swale District Council to adopt building standards 50% higher than the BREEAM standards.

She went onto inform the Committee that there were currently spaces for online training on retro fitting homes, ranging from level 2 to level 5. The Council were able to sponsor Officers to apply, and 1000 free places were available until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

- 4.4 The Chairman requested Members submit any comments or suggestions by 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## **5. Rural Speed Limits**

- 5.1 The Chairman and Head of Environment & Land Management spoke to the Committee about rural speed limits and the positive effect they would have on carbon emissions. It was suggested that a proposal be submitted to the Joint Transportation Board to forward on to KCC Highways. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications cited KCCs “Vision Zero” road safety consultation as a good opening and opportunity to communicate ABC’s objectives to KCC.
- 5.2 A Member mentioned the fact that pollution had recently been registered as the cause of death on a death certificate, and this highlighted how important this issue was. Consideration needed to be given to car pollution around schools also, since idling engines were contributory. He added however that many people in rural areas were dependent on motor vehicles, so it was important to strike the right balance.
- 5.3 The Committee agreed the recommendations and the Head of Environment & Land Management would provide draft wording after the meeting. She reiterated the importance of partnership working and indicated that Cabinet would also require cost implications and priorities. The Chairman asked the Committee to provide any further comments by 9<sup>th</sup> February.

### Post Meeting Note

The Head of Environment & Land Management drafted the following recommendations to go to Cabinet:

“This group recognises that, in general, lower speeds for motorised vehicles are likely to have a positive effect on air pollution and carbon emissions. Therefore, this group accepts in principle that reduced speed limits on rural roads and around education settings should be encouraged. As such, this group will comment on KCCs “Vision Zero” road safety consultation that we support 30 mph speed limits in villages across Ashford and 20 mph near schools. We will lobby for signage outside schools to deter vehicle idling. We recommend that Cabinet ask the Joint Transportation Group to formally consider the adoption of the principle that, upon application, there will be a presumption in favour of the adoption of 30mph speed limits in villages in Ashford and 20mph speed limits close to educational settings. “

## **6 Member briefing on Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan and ABC Carbon Neutral Action Plan**

- 6.1 The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications explained that she hoped to organise a Member Briefing on this topic, but there would not be sufficient time for this to take place prior to the next Full Council meeting, since the consultation ended mid-March. Instead, the Strategy & Policy Development Manager would circulate the plan to the Committee and invite comments from Members, for her to then collate and submit to KCC.

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