

Climate Change Advisory Committee

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee held on the **20th September 2022**.

Present:

Cllr. Barrett (Chair);
Cllr. Feacey (Vice-Chair);

Cllrs. Blanford, Campkin, Ledger, Mulholland.

Apologies:

Director of Place, Space & Leisure, Project Manager Carbon Neutrality.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Forest, Nilsson, Wright.

Assistant Director of Environment, Property & Recreation, Climate Change Manager, Senior Climate Action Officer, Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Allotment & Service Support Officer, Housing Development & Regeneration Manager, Senior 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, the Managing Director of Energyshift and was the Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd August 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.
- 2.2 The Chair advised that the Solar Go item that had been discussed at the previous meeting, had been to the Council's Corporate Business Management meeting and the decision had been taken to not progress this project further. This was due to a number of factors including increased inflation, the fuel crisis and the potential for equalities to be affected by proceeding. The Vice-Chair confirmed that Cabinet had sought to set up a Welfare Advisory Group to address the cost of living crisis and assist with targeting those most vulnerable within the Borough. Further expenditure and support would be required as part of the next phase of the household support grant.

- 2.3 It was confirmed that the Portfolio Holder was kept abreast of the work of the Committee and all decisions on projects recommended to Cabinet were decided upon by Cabinet as a whole.

3. Climate Action Team Update

- 3.1 The Climate Change Manager introduced this item and gave verbal update to the Committee that covered the following subjects and points:

- International House & Julie Rose Stadium - funding had been secured from the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund, which would be used to fund the decarbonisation plans for International House and Julie Rose Stadium. Floor plans and data had been sent to the consultant, surveys were awaited which would produce the decarbonisation plans for both sites.
- Ellingham Way - works had shifted slightly. The Senior Building & Project Surveyor would be leading on the re-roofing project. It was likely that more in-depth ways of decarbonising the building would be explored.
- Carlton Road - meter surveys had been completed with the details sent to UK Power Networks to look at power connections. This would take approximately 8 weeks therefore the project would not start until November/December. The original project outline intended for surplus energy to be sold back to the grid, however the sub-station was not available and it was too expensive to set up a new one. Instead investigations were underway into providing lower cost energy to tenants instead.
- UK Power Networks (UKPN) – there were widespread delays relating to UKPN and the capacity to take on new connections to the grid. This was widely known and was not Ashford centric but it was worth keeping in mind in relation to projects and potential knock-on delays.
- Stour Centre – the solar project was ongoing, it had been confirmed that solar arrays could power the Centre however more panels would be required than originally envisaged. This would be reported to PMG in October/November for sign off.
- Tenterden Leisure Centre – work on a bid was underway, with plans for a solar array and two air source heat pumps.
- Funding Opportunities – there were some new opportunities coming on stream, including;
 - ECO4 (Energy Company Obligation) which was a government energy efficiency scheme that was administered by Ofgem. It

would be a four year scheme running to March 2026, aiming to reduce fuel poverty and energy bills in the long term. A statement of intent to take part had already been issued and was on the Council's website. The scheme was on hold awaiting further guidance from the Government, work was being undertaken in the meantime to ascertain who would be undertaking the work on behalf of the Council etc.

- Sustainable Warmth Scheme – £1.6m had been allocated to the Council. There had been a few delays, however an advertising campaign had been carried out to inform the general public how to apply for this funding, with 22 referrals being received to date. An inter-authority agreement was required which was delaying the start of the work.
- Community Forum – work was underway in setting this up. It was hoped to be used as a public sounding board, sharing of information and best practice and to better understand the barriers for people. This is initially envisaged to be an online forum but there was some scope for an annual face to face event which they would explore further.

3.2 The Climate Change Manager advised that in terms of reporting to the Committee on progress they would align this with the action plan agreed in July and that reporting would be on a quarterly basis commencing at the next meeting of the Committee. She proposed sending a link to the master plan on a quarterly basis so the Committee could see what actions had been completed and keep tabs on areas of interest in advance of the meeting. The Climate Change Manager shared a graph with the Committee that details the Climate Action Plan 2022-24 Priority Attainment, this showed the percentage of work completed under each category and showed a positive direction of travel.

3.3 The Chair opened up the item for discussion and the following points were made:

- A Member requested clarification on the proposed works to Tenterden Leisure Centre. It was advised that works would be undertaken to remove the reliance on gas. The Portfolio Holder was due to be briefed on the works within the next few weeks and Officers advised that this would also be shared with the Committee.

- Issues with connections to the grid were acknowledged and it was questioned what troubleshooting processes were either in place or could be set up to reduce these? The Climate Change Manager advised that mapping work could be carried out to ascertain where connections were and this could be added as a layer on GIS mapping. When dealing with Council assets this process was turned on its head and therefore there could be instances, such as Carlton Road, where connections to the grid were not possible. The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager further advised that there were other options available at Carlton Road, such as supplying lower cost electricity to tenants, installation of electric vehicle charging points, supplying electricity to the Aspire Depot.
- The storage of electricity and the use of batteries for storage was discussed. The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager advised that nothing was being ruled out, however consideration needed to be given to the viability of batteries, including the ability to recycle.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) **The update be received and noted;**
- (ii) **Future updates on the Climate Action Plan 2022-24 will be provided on a quarterly basis**

4. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

4.1 The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager introduced this item and gave a PowerPoint presentation which updated the Committee on the current status of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the work being undertaken by the Council in support of this bid. He highlighted several points to the Committee, including:

- Four out of five homes that will be lived in in 2050 had already been built.
- A fabric first approach would be taken to stop/reduce heat escaping properties. They would target the worst performing properties in the social housing stock and increase the EPC ratings of these to a C rating. There would still be room for improvement on these, and other properties in the future.
- Tenant engagement was vital throughout the project, as there would inevitably be disturbance to their homes whilst work was undertaken.

- Officers had been working with an 'Accelerator' Turner & Townsend to improve the Council's bid and had also been part of best practice seminars and gained a greater understanding of the process and the bid submitted.
- Of the Council's housing stock 1,200 properties were at or below an EPC rating of C. 745 units were the basis of the bid.
- E.ON had been engaged to deliver the programme and due to the size of the company they were confident that they could deliver by the June 2025 deadline.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had committed to undertaking these works, the extra money provided by the Fund would ensure that more could be done to bring the housing stock up to an EPC rating of C.

4.2 The Chair opened up the item for discussion and the following points were made:

- The works would commence in February 2023. There had been no further delays to the funding announced and the Housing Development & Regeneration Manager was confident that the work would commence on schedule.
- The fabric first approach would look at wall and loft insulation initially but for some properties this would not be enough, and then they would progress on to air source heat pumps and further measures to reach the EPC rating of C.
- Money could be drawn from the Fund monthly or quarterly, once the works were underway a decision would be made based upon the level of information required.
- Other Local Authorities had submitted bids to the Fund, some of these had been done as consortium bids. The Accelerator had confirmed that the bid submitted by the Council was considered large but also a quality bid, which had been reassuring.
- The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager gave some area specific examples of work that would be carried out as part of this project. This would incorporate the entirety of the Council's area not just one area of the Borough.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

5. Water Savings on Allotments

- 5.1 The Allotment & Service Support Officer provided feedback on the proposal for borehole drilling on allotments. He had liaised with Dover Town Council who had undertaken similar works in April 2022 and confirmed that excluding the necessary surveys cost would be between £15,000 and £35,000. Given that there were 12 allotment sites to consider this would amount to a considerable sum. Further discussion was had between Officers and an alternative solution of rainwater capture was proposed. South East Water had offered to provide water butts for each plot, the delivery of those was in the process of being arranged but was envisaged this would occur during December 2022/January 2023.
- 5.2 There was considerable discussion regarding the use of IBCs to harvest rainwater. There were a number of considerations including the cost, cleaning to ensure there was no contamination and siting. Officers endeavoured to investigate this further.
- 5.3 Members questioned whether South East Water would extend the scheme to Parishes that had allotments. The Allotment & Service Support Officer advised that he would make Parishes aware of the scheme. A Member advised that South East Water also made water butts available to purchase at cost price.
- 5.4 It was questioned whether the free compost scheme would be made available again. Officer confirmed that they would liaise with Blaze Farm Compost regarding this.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet endorse the Aspire led pilot project to install large water collection containers (IBC's) in a specified Ashford Borough Council allotment to evaluate the effective role this project could play in reducing mains water usage by harnessing rain water and making it available to allotment users.

6. Big Green Week

- 6.1 The Senior Climate Action Officer introduced the item and using a PowerPoint presentation gave an overview of the events taking place during Big Green Week, these included:
- Big Green Week Roadshow – this would take place on 24th September from 10am to 5pm in the town centre. This would be a fun filled information event sharing the answer to the question “What can I do to save the planet?”
 - River Clean – the Kentish Stour Countryside Project were leading on a river clean and litter pick along the Stour.

- Eco School Event – Singleton Environment Centre were hosting an invite only eco school event and teach meet. This would be focused on pond maintenance and biodiversity.
- Big Green Plant – this was taking place over four days in Victoria Park with an aim to plant 2,500 plants in the sensory garden.
- Big Lunch – Repton Community Centre would host a lunch focussing on food, highlighting sustainable choices and healthy living on 1st October from 11am to 2pm.

6.2 The Committee were encouraged by all the work that had gone into the Big Green Week and Officers undertook to make all Councillors and Parishes aware of the events taking place.

6.3 The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager advised that there was a project “in train” to look at education surrounding littering from vehicles and what if any action could be taken to prosecute those doing this. Any action would require video evidence.

6.4 Engagement of schools in environmental projects was touched upon, with Members questioning the involvement of secondary schools in the Borough. The Senior Climate Action Officer advised that schools of all sizes were invited to be involved in projects, there were projects coming up that would target secondary schools however these had been delayed slightly.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

7. Project and Reports Tracker

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

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