

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT:

Members of the Working Group: Councillors Roberts (Chair), Brader, Mrs Brown, Mrs Crane, McQueen, Picker and Roodhouse

As the Chair was experiencing IT issues, Cllr Mrs Crane took the chair for the meeting.

Officers: Dan Green (Deputy Executive Director and Head of Environment and Public Realm), Chris Worman (Parks and Grounds Manager), Colin Horton (Green Spaces Officer) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June were approved.

The Deputy Executive Director (DED) provided an update on some of the points raised on 22 June:

Council's Officer Group

Following the meeting on 22 June, a group of officers met to discuss various short-term pieces of work – Parks Connector Network, Green Space Strategy, Tree Strategy and Pollinator Friendly Strategy. These strategies and documents would be presented to the working party at a future meeting.

The officer group agreed that it was key to progress with baselining of the council's current carbon footprint and identifying means of moving that forward towards net zero carbon footprint in the future as this work would inform all other work of the council relating to climate change.

Countywide Officer Group

The officer group was made up of lead officers from the five districts and boroughs and Warwickshire County Council. As a collective, the group was trying to identify common areas where they might all look to work together.

At the last meeting, the group had committed to joining up on methodology of baselining activity. This would ensure that consistent methods were used to understand the true picture across the whole of the county and beyond.

The working group might wish to consider the following topics for future meetings:

- Local Transport Plan – extend an invitation to WCC to attend a future meeting of the working group to discuss county's transport plans
- Electric Vehicle Charging – development of a local strategy

Comments made by the working group following the DED's update:

The working group was made aware that the Climate Assembly UK had recently reported back to Parliament their findings and recommendations. The report showed a broad public support with what actions the Government needs to take to tackle climate change.

Topics to include at text meeting of the working group

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	OFFICER
Communications and Engagement	A proposal on how the working group could engage with public on the topic of climate change and the work undertaken by members and officers	Communication, Consultation and Information Manager
Housing	A report concerning energy efficiency of council's existing housing stock and plans for retrofitting/upgrades/etc	Head of Communities and Homes and/or a lead officer
ECO Funding and Green Homes Grant	A report concerning ECO funding, green homes grant and most up to date guidance available	Head of Communities and Homes and/or a lead officer

Topics to be included at future meetings

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	OFFICER
Housing	A report concerning the council's approach to new housing and what the council might be able to do within the Planning Policy Framework	Head of Communities and Homes and/or or a lead officer Head of Growth and Investment and/or a lead officer

4. PARKS CONNECTOR NETWORK

A briefing note broadly outlining the concept of the Parks Connector Network was presented by the Green Space Officer and considered by the working group.

The idea behind the Parks Connector Network was to improve options for residents and visitors by making use of Rugby's various interlocking open spaces and encourage more sustainable active transport via walking and cycling.

The Green Space Officer and the DED attended a meeting of the Rugby Cycle Forum last week where the Parks Connector Network was discussed. The Rugby Cycle Forum was broadly in favour of the concept put forward by the council and wished to be engage further as the concept develops.

The working group felt that a cost breakdown for the different parts of the network would be beneficial to future discussions. A breakdown would be provided as part of a progress update at a future meeting.

5. POLLINATOR FRIENDLY POLICY

The working group considered the draft Pollinator Friendly Policy presented by the Parks and Grounds Manager.

DEFRA produced a national 25-Year Environment Plan which identified pollinators as a priority. As part of the plan, DEFRA was in the process of producing a National Pollinator Strategy for public and private landowners. The strategy would look at what landowners were currently doing and put measures in place to reverse some of the biodiversity decline.

The purpose of a local policy was to highlight the importance of ensuring all council's activities meet the requirements placed upon all local authorities under The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Section 40 of the Act required local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that was consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision-making. 'Conserving biodiversity' might include enhancing, restoring or protecting a population or a habitat.

Public engagement was a key element. It was important to engage with residents in what the council would like to achieve, what the plans were, why a strategy was required, etc. The policy included any planned work and projects but also any potential work that could be undertaken in the future. The policy was a step towards engaging with Rugby's communities and creating an understanding of the topic.

The working group was informed that the Rugby Youth Forum were keen to engage with the working group and be part of any future consultations. The council was also worked closely with schools and started to see interest from parishes.

The draft Pollinator Friendly Policy was noted by the working group and recommended for wider member consultation.

A progress update would be provided at a future meeting of the working group.

6. DRAFT RBC TREE POLICY

The working group considered the draft Tree Policy presented by the Parks and Grounds Manager.

The overall aim of the tree policy was to ensure that the Council's tree stock was retained, enhanced and increased in the most proactive manner whilst ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the public and property. The policy was intended to provide direction and ensure a consistent approach to trees in a number of key areas such as management, inspection and planting of trees on council owned land, Tree Preservation Orders, etc.

The Government had undertaken in-depth research during lockdown into levels of pollution and air quality in particular with no cars on the roads. The researched showed that levels of pollution and air quality did not improve during lockdown. Less cars on the roads was partly the solution with mitigation (planting and management of trees) playing a key role.

A national Tree Policy was soon to be published for public consultation. The aim of the policy was to plant 75k of trees a year.

The focus of a local policy was on what the council was doing. Various partners including Woodland Trust, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, The Tree Council were consulted with and their comments incorporated into the draft policy.

The draft Tree Policy was noted by the working group and recommended for wider member consultation.

A progress update would be provided at a future meeting of the working group.

7. CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN AND SCHEME OF WORK

The working group considered the scheme of work produced to enable consultants to carry out works to move towards Carbon Neutrality presented by the DED. A proposed timeline for the various steps of the tender process formed part of the report.

The Carbon Management Plan and Scheme of Work was noted by the working group.

The DED would consult with the council's Procurement Team about the possibility to engage a subgroup of the working group in the evaluation of tenders and report back to members via email.

A progress update would be provided at a future meeting of the working group.

8. FUTURE MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Meeting dates for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year were agreed as per the report subject to the following amendment:

The meeting scheduled in November be pushed back by a week to accommodate the timeline for the evaluation of tenders listed in the Carbon Management Plan and Scheme of Work report.

CHAIR