

# MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

22 JUNE 2020

## PRESENT:

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

**Officers:** Dan Green (Head of Environment and Public Realm), Raj Chand (Head of Communities and Homes), Stephanie Chettle-Gibrat (Head of Growth and Investment) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

## 1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2019 were approved.

## 2. EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE GROUP'S WORK AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Group discussed its future programme and workstreams based on the broad aims contained in the report submitted to Cabinet on 3 February 2020 and considering the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There was a view that the work of the Group should be member-led. There were a number of opportunities for some quick wins and some longer-term more strategic work. Focussing on some quick wins would provide positive feedback for residents. Some potential workstreams and topics discussed included:

### Parks Connector Network

This project was being led by the Green Spaces Officer and fell under the remit of sustainable transport. It was based on a network of paths linking parks and green spaces. There was an opportunity for members of this group to get involved in progressing that agenda and report back to the group. Detailed links to Sustrans Lias line would connect into the park project well without deflecting from the wider agenda. It was important to maintain a focus on sustainable transport over the longer term.

### Ward Audits/Tree Planting/Green Strategies

Ward audits were a recommendation of the Local Government Authority (LGA).

Tree planting and urban meadows could be incorporated into audits or surveys. Outcomes would feed into strategic documents including the Green Space Strategy which was now out of date. Audits would also provide a picture of all wards and support future planning. They could be run in tandem with a public survey.

Some baseline work was needed before any tree planting planning commenced to ensure the right locations were selected. Biodiversity and green infrastructure require a strategic approach to support climate change. Grasslands were well protected and

there was a need to liaise with other parties. This was not necessarily a quick win piece of work.

This would be an appropriate time to begin a review of the Green Space Strategy.

There were Government funds available for tree planting schemes. The Woodland Trust were willing to assist councils with strategies and support planting.

### External Consultant

There was a question raised over whether the proposed consultancy work should be progressed. This was a good opportunity to gain specialist support to take a holistic view across the Borough and the wider strategy around climate change. It would also help highlight the short, medium, and long-term actions.

### Communications and Engagement Plan/Survey

An initial survey would engage residents and organisations and would gather valuable feedback on residents' views and information on the public facing element.

External organisations could be engaged in survey work to help gather information and support a public facing element. Survey outcomes would give an understanding of residents' tolerances and the level of sacrifice they would be prepared to make in relation to climate change.

### Procurement

A focus on environmentally friendly products and sustainable sources was needed. The Federation of Small Business would assist the council in looking at the supply chain and how to support local businesses. The Council's Procurement Officer could be involved in this work.

### Funding

Cabinet approved a reserve of £0.5m to support the initial work required and commence delivery of a forthcoming action plan. The money remained ring fenced for this purpose.

### Government Grants

The council had submitted a bid to the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (C&W LEP) for funding towards the Herbert Grey College project. Urban and Civic had also applied for funding for an incubator unit. An update could be provided to the group in the next few weeks.

The council continued to follow-up on any possible funding or grant sources.

### Covid-19

Since the group commenced its work, the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in a delay in this being progressed while resources were directed towards other demands. It was acknowledged that there had been some emerging positive impacts such as

virtual working and people not travelling to work. Warwickshire County Council had introduced a one-way traffic system and a question was raised over whether there was a way of monitoring the effects on air quality and the overall scheme.

Conversations had taken place with Dave Ayton-Hill at WCC. WCC were monitoring the new arrangements and once that was better understood this would be reported back to the group.

Covid-19 recovery could be included in the public survey.

There were opportunities to link into the work strands and actions that fall under the council's Recovery Strategy. Health and community related issues could also be incorporated.

### Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

There were some interesting ideas emerging from the ECO worth monitoring and a suggestion was made that the group be updated at a future meeting. Cabinet had approved a budget of £10,000 to be met from the Climate Change Energy reserve for assessment work. This was a worthwhile scheme that could inform some climate change objectives, while factoring in the need to support vulnerable residents in fuel poverty or on low incomes.

Further comments and points raised included:

In addition to the effects of Covid-19, the council had been through a period of change that included key projects such as digitalisation. There were aspects that could form part of the groups work looking internally at the council's current position.

A document issued by the LGA *Menu of commitments and actions for Climate Local authorities* was a useful source of information.

The planning and built environment were key areas. It would be helpful to have some chapters or headings above the small, medium, and long-term actions.

This was an opportunity to consider a strategic way of managing and dealing with the environmental effects of fly tipping and waste. This did not fall within the original scope of the groups work and was more appropriate for overview and scrutiny.

### Next Steps and Timescales

It was agreed that:

This was a large piece of work and it needed to be broken down into short, medium, and long-term actions and it was important that resources were allocated to the appropriate places. Officers would take away the key points and suggestions raised at the meeting and liaise with the Senior Management Team to draw up a series of objectives and realistic timescales. This would be then be shared with the group.

As previously agreed, an external consultant would be engaged to work on the baseline. This was important to track longer term goals and ensure the carbon footprint was right.

The involvement of residents was key. A public survey would be generated and incorporate information on the Covid-19 recovery. A survey conducted by Gloucestershire County Council could be used as an example. The Communication, Consultation and Information Manager should be involved with this.

Ward audits would be produced. Input from the Group on planning for this was required.

Realistic timelines for the ward audits and survey were needed.

Officers would consult colleagues on tree and grassland strategies and how they could be managed. This was an appropriate time to review the Green Space Strategy.

Contact with the Federation of Small Businesses in relation to the procurement work identified was required.

The topic of fly tipping was not a matter for this group and should be passed to overview and scrutiny.

**CHAIR**