

Climate Change Advisory Board

Wednesday, 12 October 2022

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

Councillors: Harold Craske
Sarah Gow
Shane Mochrie-Cox
Diane Morton

Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Stuart Alford	Assistant Director (Operations)
Darren Everden	Assistant Director (IT & Transformation)
Saida Shaikh	Climate Action Delivery Manager
Nicole Arthur	Service Manager (Housing Operations)
Joshua Arthur	Project Surveyor (Housing Operations)
James Young	Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Keith Grimley	Senior Economic Development Officer
Jackie Denton	Customer Services Manager (Minutes)

15. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence received.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2022 were signed by the Chair.

17. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

18. Climate Change Delivery Plan and preparations for Annual Reporting

The Climate Action Delivery Manager presented members with the Climate Change Delivery Plan for consideration and set out preparation for the council's third Annual Report.

Officers from across the services reported on their related areas.

Priority 1: GBC – The organisation

Educate all council Members and officers on Climate Change

- 43 staff completed the Carbon Literacy training, 22 of those have made pledges and been certified and a number of staff have made pledges but await confirmation that they are good enough to be certified. A few people haven't yet made pledges.
- To become a Carbon Literate Organisation we have to meet certain criteria for achieving Bronze, Silver and Gold. At the moment we can go for the Bronze level. The next stage is Silver where 15% of our staff must be accredited so 75 staff. We have trained 43 and certified 22 so to get to 75 will take us longer but we can go for Bronze and work towards Silver over the coming months.

The Assistant Director (IT & Transformation) and the Climate Action Delivery Manager responded to questions regarding the training as follows:

- You have to make two pledges, one in your professional life and the impact you can make in your working environment and the other is an impact on your private life. They are checked by the Carbon Literacy Project to ensure they are suitably robust.
- In terms of what the output of that is, it's about raising the awareness of how our actions affect the carbon emissions of the authority so we undertake our business with that in mind and understanding the implications of our decisions.
- An example of a professional pledge would be looking at the area of work you are involved in and an action that could be changed in your service or what you could do to further promote carbon literacy with your colleagues as champion in your area. It could be direct action or advocacy.
- In terms of personal pledges, it isn't just saying I am just going to go over to a Green Energy Tariff, it must be more robust than that, something which will have a more significant impact.
- In terms of accreditation, we have already met the criteria for Bronze. Each accreditation level has different costs, Bronze is £1500 and Silver is £2500 so if the organisation upgrades within 3 years then it deducts the amount from the previous level and the difference has to be paid, £2500-£1500 so £1000 has to be paid for Silver instead of the full price of £2500. We will take a report to Management Team in due course.
- In terms of how long it will take to train the additional 32 staff and get them accredited, I would say it would hopefully be within six months to a year.
- All Kent Districts are doing the training.
- Because the pledges are personal to the individual they aren't shared so it is very difficult to give a list of examples of what other people have submitted. The Director (Corporate Services) advised that in her role it was about being an advocate and pushing climate change in our decision making. We now have a section on the Management Team template which must be completed for all reports. Her personal pledges include looking at alternative methods of transport, changing her diet and planting a wildflower meadow. Ultimately it is about making a conscious change in the way you act and behave and interact with people around you. We are trying to

promote it more within our local communities going forward. We have some activity around community engagement and are producing a programme of activities in a proactive role. We are leading by example.

- Cllr Gow advised that she had done the training herself and felt it was very robust and it isn't easy and the work to do the pledge involves a lot of work. It really has the potential to educate councillors and officers. It looks at what you can change in your life to make an impact. Her personal pledge is to reduce the red meat in her diet.
- The training will be rolled out to Members in the next administration.

Progress plans to replace the existing Civic Centre, The Woodville, Cascades Leisure Centre and Cygnet Leisure Centre by 2026 with new energy-efficient buildings

- New carbon-efficient Civic Centre and Theatre – Awaiting outcome of a Levelling Up Fund bid for £20m.
- New leisure centre on Cascades site – Looking to achieve the principal of Passivhaus

Develop and implement a programme of targeted carbon reduction projects focusing on energy source

- Brookvale Depot – Mapping operational needs to inform the preferred option for the site. A site survey has been completed to look at whether we go down the retrofit route or to put an alternative on the site. There are questions around the fleet and any infrastructure, it isn't purely about the building but how that site will operate going forward. In the process of submitting the next phase of the scheme.

Seek to secure an alternative energy supply through procurement of renewable energy when the current supply contract ends in 2024.

- In discussions with LASER on what their provision will become October 2024 but also talking to other providers to see what is on the market so we can move to a truly renewable energy supply. Although they are often branded renewable that is not always the case.
- The contract we currently have does include a fixed element. One thing we can do as a Board is look at our consumption and energy lighting and the public sector decarbonisation scheme will likely assist to further that work.

Design and implement a fleet replacement programme intended to deliver decarbonisation of the fleet by 2030 focusing on small and medium size petrol and diesel vehicles from 2022.

- We have 10 EV vans and orders placed for 8 electric vehicles to be used within Housing, Cemeteries and Street Cleansing.
- New 10-year vehicle replacement plan is being finalised to meet Net Zero ambitions. Trialling electric dustcarts at the moment but they are expensive, can only go 45mph and aren't good with hills. It comes in one standard specification so depends how the service runs.

- Continuing to use routeing software to ensure fleet minimise journey times. Looking at bin sensors to ensure jobs are carried out when required.

Develop a Sustainable Travel Policy to reduce the level and impact of business travel

- A number of cycling schemes for employees are being evaluated and an offer to be made to staff when the relevant supplier has been chosen. Cyclopark are also able to provide staff with cycling confidence training
- Employer Travel Club – encouraging people to utilise public transport and offer staff savings on Arriva. We need to go far wider than buses and cycling by understanding what our staff need to take that behaviour change. We need to promote the Club more but also look at the package on the whole to take those decisions and make a change.
- It is a good example of how we need to encourage people to use buses and that needs to be taken up with the Transport Board.

Priority 2: GBC – the housing provider

Implement a GBC resident engagement strategy around Climate Change. Work with partners to promote Climate Change and adjust behaviours

- Strategy now implemented. Working closely with the Energy Savings Trust to publish information to our residents on how they can save energy and we are currently working on an Energy Advice leaflet for residents. It is currently being finalised and will then be published. We have also been working with the Tenant Advisory Service on how we can improve the way we liaise with our residents and increase the awareness of climate change and the retrofit work we need to do as a council.
- We have been doing a lot of work with the Private Housing Team on how they can be encouraged to follow suit. There has been a lot of interest from private landlords and the Private Housing Team about how we can share information we are giving our own tenants to theirs and we are using opportunities to promote what we are doing to private landlords through events we have been speaking at such as at London Climate Action Week.

Ensure all investment decisions regarding the council's housing stock are made with consideration to the impact of Climate Change. Reducing carbon emissions and improving the energy rating of the housing stock

- The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund scheme has seen 175 properties surveyed and 100 receiving insulation since June.
- Currently working on a second bid of Wave 22 of the social housing fund and we are looking to increase the amount of measures to include double glazed windows, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and heat pumps.
- The council was successful in its funding bid to deliver the whole house retrofit scheme, Energiesprong, to 10 non-traditional constructed homes.
- Independent Living Scheme, Merston Court and 54-62 Hermitage Road, Higham – The installation of the council's first Ground Source Heat Pump heating system has

now been successfully completed and we are starting to receive positive feedback from residents and this will be monitored over the next few months to see how it performs. Hermitage Road is expected to see a saving of 24 tonnes of carbon over 20 years and Merston Court 13.67 tonnes.

Ensure all projects deliver new council-owned housing target of net zero standards and include provision for electric vehicle charging

- St Columbas – 46 unit redevelopment scheme is likely to be the first new build to have ground source heat pumps. The scheme will meet the new Part L and O Building Regulations and Part S.

Explore alternative energy solutions for communal areas and council housing tenants

- In terms of the energy tariff on renewable energy, we are not sure what they can supply is completely green. There is more interest in solar panels on some of our blocks.
- Recently completed the installation of the Solar PV at Carl Ekman House which has generated 3.97 MWh and £2,064.40 of electric.

Develop and deliver a programme of investment in EV charging points in existing housing estates

- The installation of EV charging at Carl Ekman House and Bishops Court has now been completed which will provide two charge points at each site for residents and the council's fleet.

Work with council tenants to promote a better understanding of the benefits of alternatively-powered vehicles and active travel options

- When we first did the Action Plan the information we wanted to advertise was about Climate Change, net zero, reducing their footprint but the work we have put in on training our energy champions and putting literature together has proved really helpful and through surveys we have had positive feedback.

Reduce the amount of waste generated by the service and tenants that is sent to landfill with the intention to increase recycling rates

- A lot of this doesn't start until the next financial year. We have reviewed what goes on on our estates and making it as easy as possible to recycle and a programme of improvement works will be created. We are hoping to recycle on a larger scale and have linked in with charities.
- Opportunities to "green" the council's property estate – Horticulture are working with Planning and Property and Landscape Designers to look at potential schemes.

Implement an overarching communications strategy to articulate how the council will seek to engage with residents, businesses, partners and communities to encourage and support Climate Change and develop a targeted programme within schools

- Engaging with local schools to promote awareness
- Key is continued publicity and social media
- Autumn Your Borough focuses on climate change activity and how tenants can be part of that journey. We are now starting to look at how we can programme activity
- Still working through the process of establishing an action group

Working with other agencies

- Waiting for government guidance on whether we can incorporate glass into the current recycling arrangements
- Improve relationships with supermarkets

The Climate Change Advisory Board noted the Climate Change Delivery Plan and support the approach regarding the preparation of this year's Climate Change Annual Report.

19. Biodiversity and tree planting improvements within the Borough of Gravesham

The Service Manager (Housing Operations) and the Parks and Open Space Manager provided an update on work regarding biodiversity and tree planting in the borough and outlined the plans for the next 12 months.

- It is a significant piece of work but work has started and will be completed by the end of this financial year.
- Towards the end of 2021/22 there were 3,174 trees planted in a number of locations, 146 were standards and heavy standards and the remainder whips that were planted as natural boundaries and as part of memorial and rewilding areas.
- Wildflowers were introduced at 12 locations within the borough and we had more success at some sites than others due to the hot summer but it's hoped there will be growth in those areas next year.
- The report outlines positive steps by us in taking a different approach to the lake at the Prom to encourage a natural habitat to increase wildlife.
- The bee garden at Windmill Hill has expanded to include flower beds.
- There has been 20 bat, bird and owl boxes installed in various locations in the borough to promote habitat for wildlife and whilst it will take many years we are confident they are in the right location.

Future plans

- The council is making every effort to enhance open spaces but also defining the urban space for people to enjoy tranquillity as well as space for light physical exercise for animals and owners. There is a need to improve the aesthetics for social benefits as well as an opportunity for biodiversity. This will be done by developing an

identity for each of the parks and open spaces in the borough (Heritage/Biodiversity/Leisure).

- The council are also now part of the newly formed Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership Steering Group and Delivery Group to review the overall tree strategy to increase coverage in Gravesham by 8% by 2030.
- Continuing to increase planting heavy standard trees across the borough. In the process of ordering 150 heavy standard trees which bring a faster sequestering of carbon and habitat of wildlife.
- To assist the overall efforts for tree planting we will work with DEFRA approved charities such as MORE: Trees and Trees for Cities and KCC programmes like 'Trees outside Woodlands' to soften landscape by planting natural hedgerows.
- As well as planting new trees it is essential to look after what we have and so we will be using recycled woodchip as mulch to contain moisture.
- With the help of Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) funding and North Kent Countryside Partnership we are proposing to plant ferns, heathers, lowland shrubs and trees to encourage and protect wildlife.
- Moving into the second phase of the Gordon Lake with the continued development of the surrounding of the lake by planting suitable water reed and vegetation to encourage birdlife and offer protection from the elements. This will include the development of a more sustainable water filtration system, energy-efficient water aeration system and floating island water beds that will offer controlled colour, habitat for wildlife and remove harmful metals and nutrients from the water. This will remove the need for the current system which has an electric bill of over £6k.
- The council were successful in a bid from LTC to work with ecologists and KCC specialists on a chalk grassland feature at the Warren. There will be a trial of wildflower seed mixes.
- Litter is very evident at the lake on the Prom but the team now have waders so the lake can be cleaned.

Members felt that very few people in the borough know how much work we are doing so it's important to do more publicity of what we are doing and why. We don't want to be slowed down by other organisations, we need to get on and do what we are doing by 2030. There is a lot to celebrate and we need to do that loud and clear.

The Chair congratulated Nicole Arthur on the work she has been doing to plant the boats in the borough.

The Climate Change Advisory Board noted the contents of the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm