

## Climate Change Advisory Board

Monday, 8 April 2024

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

Councillors: Deborah Croxton  
Gavin Larkins  
Shane Mochrie-Cox

Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Saida Shaikh	Climate Action Delivery Manager
Joshua Arthur	Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability)
Finley Treadwell	Assistant Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability)
Nicole Arthur	Head of Housing Assets
Calvin Lee	IT Projects Officer
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

### 38. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Ektaveen Thandi (Cllr Gavin Larkins substituted).

### 39. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Climate Change Advisory Board held on Monday, 09 October 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

### 40. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Mochrie-Cox declared an interest as he is a Council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL).

### 41. Climate Change Delivery Plan

The Climate Action Delivery Manager presented the board with a report detailing the Climate Change Delivery Plan and highlighted that Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) had completed 16 action items, meaning they had accomplished 30% of the delivery plan so far.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Climate Action Delivery Manager, Director (Corporate Services) and the Head of Housing Assets explained the following:

- The Climate Action Delivery Plan was available on the Councils' website alongside the strategy - this explained how GBC intended to respond. Communication with the community involved resident events and engagement events, which were successful in the past. The Council were currently developing the plan for those in 2024.

- The GBC website had recently been updated to reflect key information for residents in relation to the Delivery Plan and to provide advice on sustainability measures they could choose to take.
- Kent County Council (KCC) is eligible to receive £12 million LEVI fund and are currently working on the procurement and would be applying for the fund in April. It was estimated that the Council would know by June 2024 how the fund would be distributed across Kent districts.
- In terms of Housing Assets, the council is committed to greening the fleet. The council currently had 12 electric vehicles, which were successful also at savings costs in terms of fuel. The Council had clear plans to transfer the rest of the vans to electric, but it was vital that this was done in a way that did not interfere with the day-to-day business. They were also looking at EV (Electric Vehicle) chargers on housing estates, linking with Solar, so that the workforce would be able to charge the vehicles when out, rather than returning to the depot. A plan for the wider council fleet was currently being developed.
- There was a strategy underway on tree planting. However, it was important that preparation was done correctly. The Parks and Open Spaces Manager had been working on research in the background for the last 12 months, and it was estimated that it would take another year of work. This was also important for the incorporation of Biodiversity Net Gain as it was integral they linked.
- Officers had been visiting schools to raise awareness on Climate Change and to promote recycling. This was an on-going activity, and the Council were looking to work with KCC to build a small-scale project for HUB schools within the borough. This was still in its early stages.
- When the Council did their last tree planting project, they looked at a higher specification of tree that was more likely to survive. Whips had a low prospect in terms of survival, so they increased the specification by investing in larger trees and ensured there was a watering plan. An annual count was done to ensure that the trees they expected to survive were thriving. Members were advised that they would only plant a tree if they felt there was a good chance of survival. However, they were reminded that a certain amount of vandalism towards trees contributed to their lack of longevity.

Members noted the report.

## **42. Retrofits Presentation**

The Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability) gave the board a presentation on the retrofits project, and highlighted the following key points:

- The presentation provided an update on resident feedback and engagement activity regarding retrofit projects undertaken to the housing stock.
- Springvale Court consists of 29 flats that were previously on gas central heating. It was felt that heat pumps were a more appropriate and less disruptive option for replacement – replacing the gas system would have been at a costing of £250k.
- Resident engagement on the proposed works was undertaken to find out more about resident's current energy bills and their experiences with the current heating system.
- Following the completion of the works, 2, 4 and 6-month follow up surveys will be undertaken; the 2-month survey showed that 100% of residents had noticed improvements in their heating and hot water, and 90% of residents had noticed improvements in their energy bills.

- The Council was recognised for its good work around resident engagement and were asked to speak at the Unlock Net Zero Live 2023 event.

Following questions and comments, the Project Surveyor (Energy & Sustainability) explained the following:

- The Council had learned a lot from this project such as how much assistance was required for residents as well as around the supply chain, as for some contractors this work was new to them.
- In relation to Springvale Court, the outside areas of the properties were also considered, and better trees and plants were to be provided. It was noted that residents wanted to use outside areas, but it often required investment. This was accommodated within the retrofit plans.
- It was clarified that the investment came from HRA funds and did not affect the general fund.

Members noted the presentation.

#### **43. Solar Together Scheme Progress Report**

The Climate Action Delivery Manager presented Members with the Solar Together Scheme Progress Report and advised it was for information only, but provided some background information, such as:

- This was a collective scheme to help residents install solar panels on their homes.
- Communication plans involved direct mail, press releases, social media posts, promotion on web pages, leaflets, newsletters, as well as contacting communities and parish councils.
- The Council was unable to participate in phase one of the scheme but had participated in phase two and three.
- 87 residents in Gravesham from phase two had installed 1000 solar panels, 83 batteries, 5 EV chargers and 2 retrofits storages, resulting in a reduction of 86,255kg of CO2 from the environment.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Climate Action Delivery Manager, and the Director (Corporate Services) explained that:

- The process for this scheme involved GBC promoting the registration link that residents could use to show their interest. iChoosr had a pre-vetted group of installers who bid for the contract. The installer with the lowest price would win the bid, from which point the resident could agree to proceed, or go with an alternative provider.
- If residents wanted an EV charger installed outside their home, an assessment would be carried out. If the property was found to not be suitable for a charger, then it would not be installed. Having more EV chargers in car parks provided residents with more places to charge their vehicles should their property be unsuitable.

Members noted the report.

#### **44. Climate Emergency UK Scorecards Report**

The Climate Action Delivery Manager introduced the board to the scorecard GBC obtained through the Climate Emergency UK Scorecard, and outlined the following:

- In September 2021, Climate Emergency UK undertook, for the first time, an assessment of all UK councils' written climate action plans and created Climate Plan Scorecards for each authority.
- For the 2022 assessment, Climate Emergency UK was not able to contact the correct officer, and the report was published without our input. However, we still scored 54% on the content of our published action plans alone.
- Gravesham Borough Council obtained 32% which was above the average district score, i.e., 29% and we stood in 4th position in the Kent and Medway region.

Following questions and comments from members, the Director (Corporate Services) and the Climate Action Delivery Manager explained the following:

- This work was undertaken by a private body. Whilst the review was helpful, and it provided an opportunity to learn, that was as far as the credibility of the report would be taken given the scoring was based on a remote desktop review.
- There were aspects within the report that were partially out of GBCs control. However, there was no option to provide evidence documents to support the scorecard. The score was based on the information available on - Council's website, national data, and social media platforms.
- Ultimately, most of the carbon emissions in the borough were created by transport, which GBC could not control. They were only able to support, assist and advise vehicle users and not responsible for the Highway Network.
- A carbon reduction plan was developed for the council in 2019, and this was something that would be revisited this year given the passage of time and significant changes since then.

Members noted the report.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.18pm