

Climate Change Advisory Board

Monday, 24 January 2022

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

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

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Nick Brown	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Daniel Killian	Director (Housing)
Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Stuart Alford	Assistant Director (Operations)
Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Darren Everden	Assistant Director (Transformation & IT)
Nicole Arthur	Service Manager (Housing Operations)
Danielle Lock	Sport & Recreation Officer
Vivien Farkas-Haholt	Youth Climate Change Conference Advisor
Chidi Ikediashi	Youth Climate Change Conference Advisor
Charlie Rogers	Youth Climate Change Conference Advisor
Julie Francis-Beard	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Climate Change Cross-Party Member Working Group meeting held on Monday, 18 October 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Gravesham Youth Climate Change Conference

Vivien Farkas-Haholt and Chidi Ikediashi updated Members with what was discussed at the Gravesham Youth Climate Change Conference which was held on Wednesday 10 November and discussed global, national and local issues.

The key highlights set out by Gravesham Youth Climate Change Conference Advisors are as follows:

- Chidi Ikediashi spoke of his top 3 suggestions, and they were:
 - Reduce transport costs which would encourage more people to take public transport and reduce the number of empty buses running. During the Summer of 2021, the Reconnect Scheme was implemented which encouraged younger people to take public transport.
 - More electric cars and electric car spaces, this will encourage people to use these facilities. Offering free parking whilst using the facilities will incentivise people to come into the town.
 - Eat Local / Eat Seasonal – eat locally will make a real difference, it will greatly reduce food miles. Encourage local food to reduce carbon emissions. Implement eco labelling on food to show how far the food has travelled.

- Vivien Farkas-Haholt spoke of the conference and her top suggestions were:
 - The whole theme of the session was “think globally and act locally”. Vivien quoted a saying that John Aston, an ex-climate change officer for the Foreign Office gave “those in power and influence need to show humility in the face of views expressed by young people and combine their experience with the more authority of the young people to speed things up and get things moving faster”. Vivien said young people and children deserve to think past the year 2050. Give the young people the power to change.
 - Litter – this would be an easy change, add more bins in the borough. Reducing litter could encourage the community to keep the area clean, if it looks clean then it can be kept clean.
 - Recycling reward system – encourage more people to recycle. Implement more punishment for littering. This could be introduced not just with fines but maybe undertaking a community service or even attending an awareness course.
 - Fireworks – this is a huge problem in so many areas. There are alternatives to fireworks like laser or drone shows. Fireworks produce a lot of CO2 carbon emissions. A suggestion could be to issue a license to purchase fireworks.
 - Transport was one of the biggest issues that was discussed at the conference and the aim is to try and reduce transport costs. Currently the cost of public transport is too high, there are too many empty buses running and maybe reducing the cost of travelling could encourage more young people to travel during the summer (Reconnect) which worked really well last year. Maybe buses could move to hydrogen or electric and maybe introduce trams.

- Also in attendance was Charlie Rogers and whilst he was not at the conference, he explained that he was at this meeting because he was active at his college on Climate Change issues. Charlie highlighted the initiative of planting trees for Her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee later this year. It could be a way of young and old working together to manage this crisis. This would improve the local environment and trees are the best cutter of carbon and will improve biodiversity.

The Leader thanked the Youth Climate Change Conference Advisors for giving a comprehensive outline of their thoughts from the conference.

Following questions and comments from Members, the following areas were raised:

- Cllr Mochrie-Cox informed the Committee that he had also attended the conference on 10 November. A summary of the conference had been sent to the Prime Minister and Cllr Mochrie-Cox is currently waiting for a response and will share with the group once it has arrived. There is recognition that everyone is responsible not just the council for climate change. This will require a change in the law and some initiatives Gravesham will be able to implement but others will be implemented by other organisations or partnerships.
- Cllr Mochrie-Cox agreed with the Youth Climate Change Conference Advisors regarding the Reconnect scheme on the buses and how well received it was. It is due to finish in August 2022 so the county council will need to find ways to continue the scheme.
- Cllr Mochrie-Cox also agreed how important Eat Local / Eat Seasonal is and Cllr Sullivan is working on an economic development plan with the Assistant Director (Communities) and some actions have been implemented.
- Cllr Mochrie-Cox thanked David Meade, Danielle Lock and the Youth Advisors who all participated in the Conference. Young people have given us hope. It is all about working together but not all actions can be completed in one go.
- Following from a question from Cllr Gow, Vivien explained there are multiple ways to educate young people about climate change with regards to what council is doing. Vivien has learnt a lot at school where there are posters, campaigns, visual changes and it would be good for officers from the council to go into school to explain exactly what they are currently doing regarding climate change. Chidi explained that it would be good for the council to come into schools, not just secondary schools but primary and infant schools and colleges. Charlie suggested grabbing people's attention and maybe an interactive assembly. Opportunities that everyone can have to make a more sustainable world.
- Cllr Morton asked what the plans were for the future on how the council could engage with schools. Recycling awards may already be in the pipeline. Vivien and Charlie suggested talking with young people and explaining the recycling process. Positive award mechanism could be an excellent approach going forward and it would encourage people to recycle more. Encouraging people to focus on the good things.
- The Leader said he thought the rewards system was a good idea but not sure how it would be implemented. The Leader felt the council needed to encourage the young people and for them to educate their parents.
- The Leader explained that littering was a real problem in the borough. Charlie suggested if you handed in litter on a regular basis the person was given a card and the more litter/recycling the more stamps you receive, this could be beneficial for some kind of reward. For example, maybe money off shopping or loyalty cards.
- If Councillors were doing regular litter picking at weekends the council could encourage young people and parents to come, support and partake.
- Cllr Craske asked how the council could engage with the young people and Vivien suggested tapping into the passion of the young people for climate change, to show how much power the young people do have for their futures. Charlie suggested encouraging the older generation to work with the young people. Maybe a trial of an infant/primary school and a care home working together to explore their local park and swapping ideas. How people can care for the environment as well as caring for each other. Chidi suggested inviting the young people to future meetings and events and to listen to the council's views and ideas. Keep educating and showing what

could happen if we did nothing and change will happen. To have more exposure on the news, we have done more as a nation locally and nationally but there is more that can be done.

- The Leader said this is a journey that we have to go on. We all have to push to make things change. We, as a council, are doing that but maybe we could do more.
- Cllr Mochrie-Cox said this is not the end of the conversation, we need to continue. Whilst listening to the advisors, Cllr Mochrie-Cox explored an incentive idea – active citizenship. This is a central feature of learning currently in Scotland which supports young people in developing skills and knowledge to encourage participation in local communities. Where businesses can come on board and the council acts as the facilitator and is a way of incentivising young people. The advisors thought this would be a really good way of allowing young people that are passionate to have their say. There could be open discussions between business partners, local citizen partnerships and the council to improve the environment. It could be a way of starting to solve the climate change crisis but discussions with the collaborative could begin to solve other issues.
- The Leader asked that officers take this idea forward.
- The Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive said that officers are already going into schools, talking to different age groups and getting them involved. He found that engaging in an interactive nature works well to encourage young people to realise their future. Officers could give technical information and evidence and answer any questions that the children may have on what happens to the waste in the borough.

The Leader thanked the Youth Climate Change Conference Advisors for answering all the questions the Members put to them.

5. Climate Change Action Delivery Plan

The Assistant Director (IT and Transformation) presented to the Committee the draft Climate Change Delivery Plan.

At the meeting of Full Council on 1 December 2021, the council adopted the Climate Change Strategy for the council for the period of 2022-2030.

As part of the Strategy, a high-level, strategic Delivery Plan was set out under three key workstreams:

- **Gravesham Borough Council – the organisation** Focusing on how the council can change its own operations, and those of its employees, wherever possible to reduce the level of carbon emissions its produces.
- **Gravesham Borough Council – the housing provider** Exploring opportunities to bring the council's current housing stock up to a better level of energy efficiency standard where it is possible to do so; ensuring new council housing is built to a high level of sustainability and ensuring local planning policy reflects the need for the borough to consider energy efficiency in all developments moving forward.
- **Gravesham Borough Council – the community leader** It is clear that the council cannot directly affect all of the changes that are needed across the borough. However, in its role as a community leader, it can work with residents, community groups and partners to educate and support them in making changes which will have a positive impact on the level of carbon emissions in the borough.

There are currently officer working groups with representatives across all areas of the council that are working on these workstreams. The Delivery Plan is intended to enable measurement of the impact of actions where possible on carbon emissions, the amount of funding and resources that will be required and how challenging some of the actions will be to implement.

The Leader commented on the table on page 7 and said how visually easier the figures were in the resource column to understand by using figures for how many members of staff would be required in certain actions and the £ to indicate the costs.

Following questions and comments from Members, the following areas were raised:

- Cllr Mochrie-Cox discussed item 2.8.4 estate skip initiative and what a good idea that would be but how would it work in practice, how would residents use it properly and not abuse it. The Service Manager (Housing Operations) explained the council had been working closely with London organisations and housing providers on how they managed the scheme as they had been experiencing problems with fly-tipping on their estates. They use fobbed skips, it would be the same fob that allows them access in and out of property, and they have seen real benefits.
- Another scheme would be swapping furniture and children's toys. This could be a proactive community initiative.
- Cllr Mochrie-Cox asked whether Youth Councils would be included in item 3.1.2 – engaging with local schools and both the Service Manager (Housing Operations) and the Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) confirmed they would be included. The council reviews regularly their actions and new initiatives will be added.
- The Director (Corporate Services) responded to the Leader's question about budgets and resources and where this money was coming from. The Director (Corporate Services) explained that, by way of example, analysis of works required to the existing housing stock had been estimated at £95m which the council does not have. The Government will need to address actions that were raised from the COP 26 Conference in Glasgow and further conversations with the Government regarding funding would need to be had. The biggest impact would be people's behaviour, we can put in all the infrastructure, but it all depends on people doing the right thing.
- Cllr Gow mentioned that item 2.2.2 had no specific action. The Service Manager (Housing Operations) explained it should have said "create asset management strategy which has already commenced. 2.3.3 was also missing. The Director (Corporate Services) will re-circulate this document.
- The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) explained following a question from Cllr Gow as to whether baseline performance figures could be provided on some actions which were currently reported as N/A. The workstream groups are meeting on a regular schedule and the baseline figures which have not been supplied will be challenged. Where a direct source of information may not be available, we may be able to obtain relevant baseline data from an indirect source.
- Cllr Morton requested an update on how successful the Funding Officer was that was mentioned in 1.3.3 and 3.3.1. The Director (Corporate Services) explained that the Funding Officer joined in August 2021 and as discussed at full Council was initially focussing on assisting economic development in delivering support under the Economic Stimulus Package. In response to a further question, it was confirmed that it was intended to capture information on bids submitted and funding secured to demonstrate value for money from the role.

- The Director (Corporate Services) responded to Cllr Morton's question about the sharing of our HR services with Medway and whether it was value for money and said that the shared HR services were being re-evaluated but core functions were now being delivered by Gravesham officers.
- The Chief Executive explained that during Covid-19 local councils had to bid for funding and funding opportunities through central government. Working with central government would require a lot of money to attain climate change. DCN are currently liaising with local authorities.
- Cllr Gow suggested encouraging young people by explaining about the council's activities especially in waste management and if there was a measure in letting schools know how much recycling they were producing. The Assistant Director (Operations) explained that some waste collections from schools are now undertaken via KCC Facilities Management Contract. The Council does collect from some school but does not report back about the recycling tonnage.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) explained that the council has installed over 50 'recycling in the go' bins across the borough especially in parks and local shopping parades to continue to make recycling part of people's everyday lives. The council now provides 95% of the sheltered units with food recycling and working with the Service Manager (Housing Operations)'s team to provide a strategy on how we deal with waste on estates and introduce sustainable waste and recycling collections. There was a private block, Fisgard Court where the bin stores were not located in the best position and there were problems with fly tipping. Through working in partnership, a new enclosed bin store is being built and CCTV installed. This will allow recycling to be added to the flats and reducing fly-tipping on the development.
- Following a question from the Leader regarding what we are doing with our refuse waste vehicles, the Assistant Director (Operations) explained that the whole collection of waste will need to be reviewed in response to changes planned by the Government. A report from the Government, which was expected at the end of the 2021, would explain the fundamental changes to waste management from 2023 onwards. Businesses will have to provide the same recycling provision as households. There are currently electric waste vehicles on the market that would collect standard waste specifications but they do not fit our current collection requirements. We will be considering renewing our vehicles in 2023 then 6-7 years after but it is currently too early to state whether electric or hydrogen vehicles will be best.
- The Leader asked the Assistant Director (Planning) about the Local Plan and whether we could request developers to include greener spaces and more trees in their developments. The Assistant Director (Planning) explained that we have a Local Plan which includes policies on Climate Change covering sustainable development and design, including the Code for Sustainable Homes when Government was aspiring to zero carbon emission houses. Climate Change also covers coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding. The council has adopted guidance on replacement windows and doors which has multiple benefits as UPVC is not recyclable, is petroleum based and therefore is not a sustainable building product. As well as the Local Plan, the Government has been tightening what is required via building regulations and this is important as it sets a national requirement rather than varying between local authorities and it focuses on fabric first. The Government has embedded the principle of Biodiversity Net Gain and it is worth understanding that delivering biodiversity net gain can sometimes be easier in a highly managed, fairly sterile agricultural area rather than biodiversity rich locations in the town.

- Cllr Morton asked how the council saw the estate energy champions and staff energy champions working. The Service Manager (Housing Operations) explained that with the estate energy champions, we cannot just do this on our own, there is no point the council implementing changes if the tenants are not engaged in change. It is important that you have a voice on the estate and some changes may not work but some will. The council is looking at green spaces, community herb gardens and how tenants can be more involved.
- Looking at training officers to be able to offer accredited energy advice and to support the energy champions.
- Reusing furniture and goods that are left behind from previous tenants, the council looks at using it in other areas and housing. The Assistant Director (Operations) explained the council has a project planned with the Eleanor Hospice with regards to house clearances but then Covid-19 has delayed the implementation of the project. It is something that the Council is still pushing for and as we come out of the pandemic the council will continue working with the hospice. The council as part of the Kent Resource Partnerships is looking at future re-use projects with the Third Sector.
- The Director (Corporate Services) explained that the council would be part of the next phase of the Solar Together project and, with the support of the Communications Team it was intended to raise awareness of the project through a 10,000 direct mail shot and promotion through the council's usual media outlets.
- The Assistant Director (Communities) reported that Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce has a project to undertake carbon emission audits for businesses and the Council will be working with them to promote this to local businesses. We are keen to identify businesses which can act as exemplars for others.
- The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) explained more electric vehicle charging points are being installed in the borough. More charging points are being installed in Parrock Street carpark which are intended for use by (but not exclusive to) residents that do not have their own off street charging facilities at home. In addition to this, there is currently a shortlist of 10 new electric vehicle charge point locations in the borough. Eight locations have been confirmed as viable and will be taken forward. The viability reports for the last two locations are expected shortly. A challenge with finding viable locations is whether the electrical infrastructure is sufficient to support the full range of electrical charging options, specifically fast charging and rapid charging. The council is investigating locations within the town centre to provide rapid chargers for taxi drivers but the electrical infrastructure has not been suitable at the locations surveyed so far. Three new locations have been identified and the viability report is expected to be received soon.
- Cllr Morton explained she had a discussion with an electric vehicle driver at Lord Street car park who was using the charge point but it would only charge to 70%. Are the charging points actually in the right location. The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) informed the Committee that the council can only install charging points on our own land. However, as the community leader we can speak to other land owners (such as supermarkets and small industrial areas) and use our influence for a wider take up in those areas.
- Cllr Morton requested a briefing note on how to use electric vehicle charging points and how they work.

Resolved: Members were asked to consider and provide comments on the draft Climate Change Delivery Plan at appendix two, prior to it being finalised

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm