

Environment & Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group
16 MAY 2022

Present: Councillors: James Wright (Chairman), Paul Clarke, Michael Croker, Gordon Lindsay, John Milne, Roger Noel, Jon Olson, Kate Rowbottom and Diana van der Klugt

Apologies: Councillors: Bob Platt and Sam Raby
Absent: Councillors:

Also Present:

5 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the previous meeting, held on 15 March 2022, were agreed as a true record.

6 **UPDATE ON THE WILDER HORSHAM DISTRICT PROJECT**

This item was presented by the Landowner Advisor to the Wilder Horsham Partnership. The Wilder Horsham Partnership is a five year project between Horsham District Council and the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) designed to help wildlife thrive and help with tackling climate change across the district.

The presentation highlighted key aspects of the work being undertaken and planned to establish and maintain a resilient landscape that protects wildlife. SWT provides advice and support to landowners and is able to deploy a large number of volunteers to assist with clearances, planting and similar activities.

The Adur Landscape Recovery Bid is due to be submitted to DEFRA on 25 May. More locally, funding could be focussed on initiatives, including "Wild About Warnham" which supported the creation of habitats and species in and around the village of Warnham.

The meeting was very positive about the project and welcomed the update. It was also noted that more urban environments – as evidenced by Warnham – are also under threat and in need of intervention. The meeting was also reassured that, whilst no guarantees can be enforced in the event of changes in land ownership, those supported are asked to provide plans for the future.

7 **DEVELOPING A DISTRICT-WIDE CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

The Environmental Co-ordination Manager delivered an update on progress on the development of a Climate Change Action Plan for the District. This is delivering against a commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan to work with

partners to become a carbon-neutral District. A number of options for taking things forward were explored:

- Restarting the Climate Change Group
- A Council-led plan
- Holding a Climate Assembly
- Establishing a new Climate Change Panel

The recommended approach, endorsed by the meeting, was for the establishment of a Climate Change Panel, that would engage partners in a concerted joint approach, and avoid duplication of findings elsewhere. Resource implications were estimated as £20K for engagement / communications, and £50K for running workshops and management of the Panel itself.

Discussion clarified that the formation of the Panel would be informed by established expertise drawn from established networks and would include community engagement from the start. It is expected that the Panel would be dynamic and continue to evolve in line with need and opportunity.

Having received the meeting's support, it is intended that this will be considered by Cabinet on 9 June.

8 COMMUNITY CLIMATE FUND

The Environmental Co-ordination Manager provided an update on the Community Climate Fund, launched in July 2020 and offering grants of up to £5K for new projects designed to tackle climate change issues.

The funding is available to community and voluntary groups, and Parish Councils.

Successful bids will demonstrate an impact on some or all of the key criteria:

- Reducing carbon emissions
- Reducing energy consumption
- Reducing water usage
- Minimising waste and increasing reuse and recycling
- Supporting and increasing biodiversity and wildlife
- Reducing travel and increasing cycle / walking and the use of public transport

Applications are considered by a joint panel on a quarterly basis. Up to March 2022 37 applications had been received, of which 18 were awarded. 9 projects have been completed and a further 6 are underway.

Defined benefits to date include a potential reduction in Carbon Dioxide emissions of around 466 tonnes, an average reduction of over £250 p.a. in electricity use, and a reduction of nearly 25,000 litres p.a. in water use. It was also noted that a lot of successful applicants are already re-applying.

Members were requested to promote the scheme locally and further information for applicants is available on www.horsham.gov.uk/climate-and-environment/community-climate-fund

9 **ELECTRICAL VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS (EVCP) NETWORK**

The meeting was updated on progress toward the Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCP) project.

Initial progress includes replacement rapid charge points in Billingshurst and Storrington, with new standard points installed in both locations along with New Street in Horsham. The whole network is due to be launched on 20 June.

A “demand map” has been developed to establish priorities for installation, which includes street as well as car park facilities, full coverage of the District will require around 7 years to complete. The meeting was reminded that the process is being delivered by Connected Kerb who are covering all costs and associated risks.

A webinar for Members will take place in mid June.

It was clarified that tariffs would need to reflect inflationary pressures and, as an example, Rapid charges will be increasing from 40p per KWH to 49p, and Fast from 30p to 35p.

In response to a question regarding the capacity of electricity sub-stations, the meeting was reassured that Electricity providers have made provision and given reassurances regarding the increased demand that the Network will create.

10 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & RURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO**

The Cabinet Forward Plan, which includes a number of related issues, was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN