

Environment & Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group
12 JULY 2022

Present: Councillors: James Wright (Chairman), Paul Clarke, Joan Grech, Gordon Lindsay, John Milne, Roger Noel, Bob Platt, Sam Raby, Kate Rowbottom, Cilve Trott and Diana van der Klugt

Apologies: None
Absent: None

Also Present: Councillors Ruth Fletcher and Jon Olson

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Notes of the previous meeting, held on 16 May, were noted.

2 **COMMUNITY ENERGY HORSHAM**

The Environmental Co-ordination Manager provided a presentation about Community Energy Horsham, with whom initial discussions have taken place. Community Energy schemes are resident-led and aim to accelerate the shift from fossil fuel based energy production to renewable energy. There are currently 424 groups across the UK.

Community Energy Horsham is backed by Energise South and Energy4All, and is focussed on increasing take up of solar photovoltaics (PV). Building owners will need to have suitably sized roof space and annual electricity usage in excess of 70,000 kwh/year. In return they receive free panels, installation and maintenance, along with discounted energy costs.

Funding is raised through a Community Share Offer, promoted by Community Energy Horsham and, outside the Horsham Area, by Energise South. Benefits include reduced carbon emissions, community empowerment and increased energy security.

The Bridge Leisure Centre is being considered as a suitable venue, and an estimated saving of 11p per Kw/Hour is projected. Other HDC owned buildings are currently under review. In principle support to take things forward will be sought at September Cabinet.

The group was supportive of the project and reflected that HDC's example would be an incentive for other building owners to get involved. It was clarified that medium to large roof space was required to provide sufficient return and the model would not be appropriate for smaller premises.

There was some discussion about the relative merits of working with a wider organisation, as opposed to investing and developing our own. The latter would require considerable investment and cost recovery would be reduced for leased

buildings where we would not benefit from the electricity cost savings. However individual examples will be assessed and where direct investment may be viable that could be the way forward.

The comparative benefits of national fundraising and a more local approach were considered. The latter, whilst encouraging a greater local involvement and commitment, would take considerably longer.

3 **DEVELOPMENT OF A DISTRICT-WIDE CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN**

An update was provided by the Environmental Coordination Manager on the Low Carbon Plan for Horsham District. Funding and the broad approach have been agreed at Cabinet and Council and discussions have taken place with consultants. Next steps will include a facilitated workshop with Council officers, and input from experts and key stakeholders. Wider community engagement via the Local Climate Engagement Programme is also under consideration.

A question was asked about how this Plan would fit in with the wider Local Plan, and it was confirmed that strategic planners were part of the conversation about the Low Carbon Plan, and will continue to contribute through the workshop and other channels.

4 **NOTICE OF MOTION ON DOMESTIC ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

The group was invited to comment on a Notice of Motion confirming the Council's belief that the need to reduce domestic energy use is a high priority for environmental and fuel poverty reasons. The Council is being asked to commit to:

- All housing being insulated to a minimum of EPC C standard
- Upgrading Council owned properties
- Ensuring that new builds are appropriately insulated to reduce fuel poverty and excess emissions.

The Notice was deferred to enable it to be considered by the three relevant PDAGs:

- The Housing & Public Protection PDAG requested an annual report, more promotion of existing schemes and that a revised statement of intent be issued once Energy Company Obligations 4 is released
- The Planning & Development PDAG noted that Policies are being drafted and will come forward once the Local Plan Review is available.

It was noted that the Notice of Motion did not really cover the owner occupied and able to pay sectors, rather more focussed on the private rental sector and areas of Environmental Health inspection. Energy efficiency and renewable energy will be a fundamental part of the Low Carbon Plan.

It was confirmed that a number of councils are requiring the inclusion of solar panels and heat pumps in new builds subject to specified conditions. It was

also questioned why the private rental sector was address in the Notice but not social housing.

5 **UPDATE ON THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINT NETWORK**

The group was updated on the West Sussex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Network, which was launched on 20 June. Rapid Charge points in Storrington and Billingshurst have been replaced, and further ones installed in Horsham, Storrington and Billingshurst. The next phase of installations will commence in the autumn.

Some issues arising from the securing of funding and discussions underway with Connected Kerb were discussed. Part of the issue was installation costs, but there were also lease and other legal issues that were causing some delays.

There is a link for people to register their interest with Connected Kerb and members were urged to share this to increase demand. The Environmental Coordination Manager will share the link. It was also commented that kerb space should also be made available for bicycle storage as well as electric charge points.

6 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN UPDATED JULY 1ST 2022**

The Cabinet Forward plan was noted

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN