

Environment & Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group
27 SEPTEMBER 2022

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

Apologies: Councillors: Paul Clarke
Absent: Councillors: Clive Trott

Also Present:

7 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Notes of the previous meeting held on 12 July were noted.

8 **RURAL PROSPERITY FUND**

The Head of Economic Development updated the Group on the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The Government had announced a top up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Horsham District had been allocated £871 733 to be spent over two financial years (2023/24 & 2024/25). Horsham District Council was one of two Councils within West Sussex to receive the fund alongside Chichester District Council.

The Rural Fund recognises specific challenges facing rural areas of lower productivity rates, poorer connectivity and access to key services.

The fund has two investment priorities of supporting local businesses and community and place. Capital funding would support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities benefitting the local economy and supporting new and improved community infrastructure.

Projects must be in a rural area – this excludes Horsham and the allocated funding to Horsham District Council would enable 25% of the funding to be spent in 2023/24 and 75% of funding in 2024/25.

The PDAG were advised that future plans were to submit Rural Fund additional information to Government for approval which had to be completed by the end of November.

The Group felt this was extremely positive to promote Community and Business within the district and the key aim of the funding was to boost the economy and local businesses. Members were keen to gain clarity on how funds would be allocated.

The Head of Economic Development advised the PDAG that they were likely to follow a Leader Style Programme which was a model whereby businesses bid for grants. Further details needed to be clarified and it was felt that working closely with Chichester District Council would enable information to be shared so the scheme could be run efficiently.

Presentation slides would be shared with the Group and a link to find out further information from the Government Shared Prosperity Fund website.

9 **OVERVIEW OF COUNCIL'S CARBON EMISSIONS FOR 2021/22**

The PDAG received an update and numerical analysis on the Council's carbon emissions from the Environmental Co-ordination Manager and Climate Change Support Officer.

The Group were reminded of the Council's aspirational targets to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 for the emissions that are directly within the Council's control such as petrol, diesel, electricity and gas. For the Council's indirect emissions such as leased buildings & supply chain, as well as water, waste, business mileage and commuting the Carbon Neutral target is 2050.

A comprehensive analysis of interim data was provided which reflected the last financial year and overlapped with the Council's short term action plans.

The main changes in 2021/22 were the HVO fuel in the fleet; all of the diesel vehicles are now powered by HVO. This has provided a huge decrease in carbon emissions.

Gas and electricity emissions has increased which has been due to buildings returning to normal usage patterns and under capacity of some buildings. Goods and services and leased buildings emissions had also decreased.

LED lights in the Forum and Swan Walk Car parks had been installed in April 2022 and were reported to be showing a positive impact. Further data on this would be available in the following financial year.

It was concluded that positive measures were keeping the targets on track and this was attributed mostly to the changes to the Council's fuel and fleet.

The Group were very interested in the presentation. Fuel costs of HVO opposed to diesel were discussed and although HVO is priced slightly higher - the huge carbon saving was outweighing the cost. The Group were also reminded that this was an interim measure as the fleet were changing some small vehicles to electric which would counteract these costs.

Current measures were ensuring the Council was working towards its' targets as much as possible. The actions to move towards the 2030 target were set out in the report to Cabinet in March 2022.

10 **LOW CARBON PLAN FOR THE HORSHAM DISTRICT**

The PDAG were given an update and reminder of the Low Carbon Plan for the Horsham District.

The Group were reminded that this information was a district wide plan, greenhouse emissions had significantly reduced in the district over the last 15 years and work had been done with consultants to understand the interventions that are needed to reduce emissions.

The Environmental Co-ordination Manager emphasised the role that Horsham District Council (HDC) has in reaching carbon neutrality for the district and there was already a high level of understanding of interventions mainly relating to energy. Numerous HDC projects, strategies and plans were also underway relating to climate change.

Moving forward, existing projects, plans and strategies needed further collation with other key stakeholders to identify key roles and ownership on how to reach carbon neutrality for the district.

Wider community engagement would be crucial moving forward and throughout the autumn work would be taken to develop the plan through workshops, external experts, member briefings and the One Planet tool for future monitoring. Consultation and engagement will also take place with Parish Councils.

The ongoing plan will be continuously monitored and lists of actions and ideas will be prioritised.

Further information and updates will be considered at the next PDAG in November.

It is hoped that a Draft Plan will also be considered at Cabinet in January 2023.

11 **UPDATE ON WILDER HORSHAM DISTRICT**

The Group were updated on the Wilder Horsham District initiative.

Over the last few months, targets have been exceeded for the project, farmer and landowner engagement had continued and bespoke advice given to individuals and groups.

A prioritisation exercise had taken place and land within the River Arun and River Adur corridors, including their tributaries was being focused on. Consideration was also being given to Horsham District Council (HDC) owned land to focus on prioritising working with neighbouring land owners' and purchasing land where there were opportunities to change the land management. Work was also taking place alongside the Planning Department to look at Biodiversity Net Gain. Parish Council workshops in the North and South of the district are planned for early next year.

The Environmental Co-ordination Manager informed the Group about the River Adur Restoration Project.

Funding of £500k has been secured through one of the strands of ELMS (Environment, Land, Management Scheme) known as Landscape Recovery, to focus on the enhancement of river quality, flood attenuation and increase biodiversity from Knepp to Shoreham.

The funding will be for a two year development phase to prepare for implementation and will be a collaborative approach with HDC working with a number of partners and landowners as a pilot project.

The Group were extremely positive about the initiative and funding. Further updates would be given at future PDAGs.

12 **COMMUNITY CLIMATE FUND**

The PDAG were reminded that the Community Climate Fund grant was available to local voluntary and community grants to take action to reduce carbon emissions in their local communities.

Four organisations had been successful from the recent applications and were all energy focused.

Ongoing and targeted promotion continues to take place in the district via contact with schools, Scout groups and churches as well as social media, Our District and Parish Council magazines.

The next round of applications close on 11 November. Previous unsuccessful applications are encouraged to re-apply. The Group were encouraged to let any organisations who may be eligible within their communities to apply.

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

The Group noted there were no current items on the Forward Plan.

The meeting closed at 6.57 pm having commenced at 5.32 pm

CHAIRMAN