

Environment & Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group
17 JANUARY 2022

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

Apologies: Councillors: None

Also Present: Ruth Fletcher and Alan Britten

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND CHAIRMAN'S INITIAL COMMENTS

There were no apologies for absence. The Chairman, Cllr James Wright, welcomed members to this inaugural meeting of the Environment & Rural Affairs Policy Advisory Group and clarified that its scope embraced council activity relating to Climate Change, Green and sustainable environmental policy and services, and ecology, protection of wildlife and the natural environment.

2 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DISTRICT COUNCIL CARBON REDUCTION ACTION PLAN

The Environmental Coordination Manager provided an update to the meeting on progress against the District Council Carbon Reduction Action Plan. Horsham District Council's aspiration is to achieve carbon neutrality for those emissions that are under the Council's direct control by 2030. This is principally through measures addressing the use of petrol, diesel, gas and electricity. For more indirect carbon emissions, such as supply chains, leased buildings, water, waste and travel behaviours, a longer target of 2050 has been set.

Details of the progress achieved between 2019/20 and 2020/21 were noted. This includes:

- a 50% reduction in business mileage and reductions in electricity use at principal buildings such as Parkside and the Capitol Theatre. It was acknowledged that changed behaviours in response to the pandemic constraints was a factor in these reductions.
- A programme of staff and public awareness continues to be delivered
- Environmental measures, including the development of a Tree Management Plan and measures to identify and enable habitat restoration are progressing
- Measures to convert the Council's fleet of vehicles to lower emission options are progressing in line with expected vehicle replacement timescales
- Increased use of LED lighting in appropriate locations, such as car parks and street lighting
- Reductions in fuel use were more modest since the use of the Council's vehicle fleet was less affected by the pandemic.

- The fleet replacement programme will be accompanied by a plan for the location and types of charge points that need to be installed to power new battery electric vehicles.
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It was noted that works undertaken at St. Peter's Hall & The RAFA Club have been a valuable trial to inform the retro-fitting of environmental measures to existing buildings, including insulation, heating and photovoltaic conversion of light as useable energy. The measures at this site have reduced the energy saving footprint from EPC E/D to a more efficient EPC B rating. Audits have been completed on a number of HDC buildings, including Horsham Museum, Southwater Country Park and Chesworth Visitor Centre, with reduction measures identified. A trial group of residential buildings are also being audited.

A three-year Carbon Reduction Action Plan is due to be presented to Cabinet on 24 March.

Members welcomed the information and the subsequent discussion enabled further clarification and further views on a number of issues, including:

- Cost recovery times on some of the necessary investment seem to be quite long but this will be factored into decision making processes since cost saving is also a major factor
- Graduation of the period of replacement for vehicles – the principal vehicles – those used for waste collection – are not due for replacement until the end of the decade.
- Options for replacement vehicle technology – electric, hydrogen or hybrid – are under review and may vary according to the demands of the vehicles in question
- Embedding environmental / sustainable principles into the wider range of council decision making and service delivery

Also recognised that use of remote meeting / home working is a factor in reducing the Council's carbon footprint since less travelling is being incurred.

3 UPDATE ON THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINT PROJECT

The Environmental Coordination Manager provided an update to the meeting on progress against the Electric Vehicle Charge Point Project. This is being led by West Sussex County Council and is being delivered through a concession contract, signed on 5th November 2021, with Connection Kerb. The contractor is responsible for the capital outlay and carries the risk. The goal is to create an easily, and universally accessible network. A portfolio approach ensures that the more lucrative areas will enable subsidy of less financially viable parts of the District. Locations for installing charge points include Council car parks and highway land. Parish Council's land Village Hall car parks and other community assets could also be used for charge point installations, at zero cost. The portfolio will include a mix of charger capacities, including some rapid charge points.

The network is scheduled for launch during w/c 7 March 2022, and the initial tranche will focus on improving and upgrading existing charging locations, including Horsham, Storrington and Billingshurst, but ultimately will cover the entire District including more rural communities.

Discussion of the details presented included

- Confirmation that rural communities will also be included, though noted that rural carparks etc. will be dependent upon the availability of a suitable electricity supply
- On electricity supply, it was observed that there is an issue with the strength of some smaller sub-stations and whether these would be equal to the enhanced demands the scheme would bring. Discussions are currently taking place with UK Power Networks who have already identified the roll-out of e-charging points into their own business development planning. A countywide portfolio, as reflected in this contract, is a more effective prospect than tackling individual sub stations separately
- Some concerns expressed about the distances from rural car parks providing e-charging to home addresses – may be a significant distance. There were also concerns about the safety of cables connecting homes to on-street charging points, and the need for safety ducting to avoid trip hazards.

Civil Enforcement Officers will be able to manage inappropriate parking in designated e-charging points using Fixed Penalty Notices, such as petrol and diesel vehicles parked in designated electric charging bays.

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FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & RURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

Items identified for the next PDAG:

- Carbon Reduction Action Plan for the next 3 years
- District-wide CO² emissions

The meeting finished at 7.30pm, having started at 5.30pm

CHAIRMAN