

Notes of the meeting of the **CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held as a Teams meeting on Tuesday, 5 April 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C A Vinson

Councillors: M Bates
P M Brivio
D R Friend
N S Kenton
H M Williams

Officers: Head of Commercial Services
Principal Climate Change and Sustainability Officer
Democratic Services Officer

44 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors S H Beer, N J Collor and O C de R Richardson.

45 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P M Brivio had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor S H Beer.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

47 NOTES

The notes of the meeting of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) held on 1 February 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48 FREQUENCY OF CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

Councillor C A Vinson advised that there were plans to refresh the performance report to include greenhouse gas emissions. As reports were published quarterly, it made sense for the PAG to align with their timetable and meet quarterly.

RESOLVED: That Climate Change PAG meetings be held on a quarterly basis.

49 QUARTERLY REPORT OF COUNCIL EMISSIONS

The Principal Climate Change and Sustainability Officer (PCCSO) advised that greenhouse gas emissions attributed to the Council covered emissions from the Council's estate, Members' mileage, etc. The report would indicate whether emissions were decreasing and include commentary. Social housing consumption was beyond the Council's control and would not therefore be included in the data. Councillor Vinson added that there were a number of areas for which the Council was not responsible for collecting data. That said, the Office of National Statistics published a good deal of interesting data and statistics, such as residents' consumption and buses, and these could be included in the annual report for

interest. He commented that the Council's work around emissions would need to be fully resourced.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

50 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UK LEAGUE TABLE

Members were advised that Climate Emergency UK, a campaign group, had recently written to councils seeking information about how they were tackling climate change. Dover's performance had been analysed and the league table published earlier in the year.

Councillor M Bates remarked that there were a lot of gaps in the table. Councillor Vinson commented that Climate Emergency UK had its own agenda, but it was fair to say that the Council was doing better than many other authorities. In response to Councillor Bates, the PCCSO advised that an action plan had been drafted at the same time as the strategy. The plan focused on greenhouse gas emissions for 2030 but there was a wider one for the 2050 target. Councillor N S Kenton noted that some areas covered by the table were the responsibility of the government or Kent County Council (KCC) and therefore meaningless when trying to measure the Council's performance. Councillor Vinson commented that, whilst the league table provided a useful insight into how the outside world saw the Council's progress, there were other areas that were of no value whatsoever. Ultimately, it was the Council's responsibility to set its targets and decide how they could best be achieved.

The PCCSO advised that the Council's quarterly performance report would normally be published in September and suggested that it would also be a good time to publish greenhouse gas data. The PAG could review the action plan and data for the end of year report at its September meeting. The finalised action plan could be brought to the PAG at the end of the year and then presented to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

51 CARBON LITERACY

The PCCSO presented the report, commenting that carbon literacy training needed to be embedded across the Council so that officers and heads of service were focused on the issues such as reducing waste, mileage, etc. She recommended that e-learning of about 45 minutes/one hour's duration would be the most effective/efficient way of delivering training for Council staff.

Councillor Vinson stressed that it was important to work in partnership with HR to identify whether training would be beneficial for all officers or just a selected group. Councillor Kenton cautioned against making the training too arduous and suggested that Members could receive a presentation initially and then undertake training if they wished to take it further. He expressed concerns about preaching to people about flying and suggested that the focus should be on making small changes which were easier to implement. The HCS reported that changes were already happening, with more staff doing remote or hybrid working. Basic good practice, such as turning off lights, etc needed to be underlined. He suggested that carbon literacy training could be added to the training for new starters.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

DOMESTIC ENERGY UPDATE

The PCCSO presented the report. She commented that the rise in energy prices had obviously heightened people's interest in renewable energy, adding that the government's price cap was likely to affect those on pre-payment meters the most. The Council's Household Support Fund had helped in the past and, if more funding was forthcoming, it would be used to support vulnerable households. She advised that the Council's energy prices were due to go up by 18% for electricity and by 29.9% for gas. The Council was still fighting for access to LAD2 funding earmarked for Dover (to be split with Dartford) which remained unspent due to contractual difficulties.

Councillor Vinson commented that energy price rises had led to an immediate financial pressure that was affecting households and businesses alike, particularly those least able to cope. The energy crisis had highlighted the need to improve the Council's housing stock in terms of energy efficiency. It also meant that minds were now more focused on reducing consumption to save energy and money. In response to comments made by Councillor H M Williams about progress made in insulating homes, he requested that the Head of Property Assets attend the next meeting to give an update on housing improvements, Energy Performance Certificates and the Council's decarbonisation fund bid, etc.

The PCCSO advised that timescales and guidance on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund had yet to be issued. The Council was keen to get involved and had been in discussions with Folkestone & Hythe District Council which had submitted a successful bid. In response to Councillor Bates who queried where matters stood on replacing gas boilers, Councillor Vinson commented that the regulations were not just affecting social housing but the wider market as well. Whilst companies were working on developing non-gas heating technologies, they were almost certainly some way off. The HCS added that demands at a national level would cause long lead-in times and increase costs so it was likely that the Council would not be able to achieve as much as it hoped, at least in the near future.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT

The PCCSO introduced the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

UK CLIMATE CHANGE RISK ASSESSMENT 2022

The PCCSO presented the report, advising that the UK's Climate Change Risk Assessment had now been published. KCC was currently drafting a climate change adaptation action plan for the county which would inform bids for government funding. The HCS commented that the Environment Agency (EA) would be focused on protecting property which meant that funding would be directed towards high-risk flood areas like Hebden Bridge.

Councillor Kenton commented that there had been serious under-investment in the maintenance of the country's dykes, ditches and rivers, with most silted up and no longer flowing. Wildlife had been lost as a result of the EA's focus on towns and cities, to the detriment of the countryside. Councillor Vinson questioned whether

money received as planning contributions towards biodiversity net gain could be used to improve dykes, ditches, etc. He was aware of some local authorities that had invested in land for nature reserves, using money received from developers. The HCS commented that there was so much bureaucracy around accessing EA funding that it was easier for the Council to carry out and fund the work itself. Councillor Vinson referred to flooding problems in Deal and the fact that a task force had been established to tackle them. Councillor Bates added that he had attended a Southern Water (SW) presentation a few months earlier where SW had set out how it was going to address issues in Deal.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

55 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

Councillor Vinson reported that he had been discussing the best way of measuring charging usage in order to identify where it was lower and higher, demand was not being met, etc. It was important that the Council used the data it collected, and there were challenges in identifying places to put charging points. Councillor Bates pointed out that charging points had only been installed in June/July 2021 so the data were still quite young. Usage was still relatively low and he cautioned against installing more charging points at this time. That being said, there had been a big surge in electric vehicle ownership so it was important to keep monitoring the situation. Councillor Kenton commented that the quality of electric vehicles would improve so it might be necessary to have spaces that offered normal parking during the day and electric charging at night. The Council would need to adapt as evidence came forward and take a flexible approach.

The HCS advised that the Council had submitted an expression of interest in another funding stream for charging infrastructure. The location of chargers was dictated to some extent by power supply. Where the Council was able to install chargers was dictated by power supply. The capacity of some pillars was really quite low and they provided more of a trickle than a rapid charge. It was important to look at the spread of charging points and the range of charges as different vehicles required different charges. He referred to domestic charging and the expectation that the Council would help residents with off-street and night-time charging given the lack of power supply in many homes. He added that there was a lot of pressure on the Council in relation to parking and perhaps the focus should be on promoting the use of public transport and reducing car ownership, in line with the green agenda. There was agreement that the location of charging points should be shown on the Council's website and that signage needed improving. The HCS mentioned that Officers were working on a cycling and walking strategy for the district.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.43 pm.