

3 December 2019

Summary of the Climate Change Working Group Meeting, which was held on 3 December 2019

1. We Are Woking presentation – Environment theme for 2020

Representatives from Ardmore attended the meeting to present the next phase of the We Are Woking PR campaign. The campaign has been running for approximately two and a half years during Woking's transformation period. The next theme for 2020 will be The Environment and will support and promote the Council's climate change and sustainability work including the climate emergency declaration. The new theme will be launched in January 2020.

The campaign is designed to promote and showcase what has been done to date as part of the Council's climate change and sustainability work; tie in with national campaigns; and promote what further work is to come particularly in light of the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration. The campaign will be based on the themes of the current Woking 2050 climate change and sustainability strategy. A calendar of events throughout 2020 will accompany and focus the campaign. The [We Are Woking](#) website will be expanded to include a new page called "For the Future" which reflects the tag line for the environmental theme. The campaign will be PR, visual and content led, to drive public awareness and participation. Various modes of communication will be used to reach a large varied audience e.g. social media, press, marketing materials and outdoor campaigns.

2. Climate Emergency – Planning for Carbon Neutrality

A draft carbon reduction action plan was presented identifying initial priorities for action in addressing the Council's climate emergency declaration. The plan acknowledges where projects are already underway as part of our existing Woking 2050 strategy together with new actions. It also indicates potential carbon savings and cost implications where possible at this stage. Further work will be needed including feasibility studies for many projects. The plan will continue to evolve and develop as new projects and activities come forward.

The ensuing discussion was wide ranging and included topics such as energy generation from renewable sources; tree planting; and the importance of an emission reduction hierarchy e.g. reduce first before offsetting. Later on in the meeting, it was agreed that the installation of electric bike charging points be added to the carbon reduction action plan.

The Group recommended to the Executive meeting on 6 February 2020 the following recommendations:

- (i) officers be authorised to implement initial actions for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as recommended in the report;
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Place) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability to agree new actions as they are identified; and
- (iii) the Executive identify £100,000 funding within the Council's budgets as an initial allocation for 2020/21 to implement the additional carbon reduction actions agreed by the Climate Change Working Group.

3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2018-2019

For a number of years the Council has reported on its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions from its own estate and operations.

The data has been processed in the same way as previous years and for the same buildings so as to aid comparison to preceding GHG reports. The way the Council reports on its carbon footprint will be changing given its new carbon neutral targets and baselines - this will mark a new chapter in reporting.

The report shows a 14% decrease in GHG emissions between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The decrease can be attributed to the following factors:

- Reduced energy consumption recorded across the majority of sites.
- Improved quality of data i.e. increasing number of actual meter readings as opposed to estimated meter readings.
- Continuing investment and improvement across NVH residential properties improving their thermal insulation and energy efficiency.
- Continuing improvements to the Council estate in terms of thermal insulation and lighting upgrades.
- Significantly reduced business mileage.

Following this item, there was some discussion on super greenhouse gases – a group of emissions that are even more potent than carbon and methane. In particular, the gas sulphur hexafluoride which is thought to be 22,000 times more heat trapping than carbon dioxide. It was noted that these types of emissions are usually associated with manufacturing industry based companies, not many of which are located in Woking.

4. Wildflowers and Grass

The group received an update on what the Council has been doing in terms of wildflower planting and changes to grass cutting arrangements since the Group's discussion in October 2017, together with proposals for what more can be done in 2020 and beyond.

A workshop run in partnership with RHS Wisley was held in November 2019 - for colleagues at the Council, Serco, in other partner organisations and community groups directly involved in wildflower growing in this area.

Some key principles for planning future sites were discussed along with potential new locations. A final list will be presented to the group at its next meeting in March 2019.

Discussion ensued about the importance of notifying the public to keep them informed particularly in terms of any changes to mowing regimes. The group noted recent campaigns encouraging the public to leave areas of their gardens wild to boost biodiversity e.g. the Blue Campaign (see www.bluecampaignhub.com). The group also discussed the benefits in removing arisings to maintain low soil fertility which better supports native wildflowers and how clearing a thin top layer of soil can reveal a seed bank – a technique also used to help regenerate heathland.

5. Action Surrey Update

Action Surrey's Q2 Report covering the period 1 July – 30 September 2019 was presented to the group. 13 out of 36 Surrey installations took place in Woking.

The group heard how the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating has been changed to D and below in identifying fuel poor households which means that Action Surrey can support considerably more people.

Action Surrey will be increasing promotions around the benefits of radiator panels as a low cost but effective energy efficiency measure.

6. ThamesWey Update

Thameswey Limited is working on proposals to extend the number of renewable energy installations including expanding the amount of PV on ThamesWey housing. Proposals are being developed both for new developments as well as improvements to existing stock. The importance of engaging ThamesWey's own tenants was emphasised – it currently has a portfolio of 650 properties.

The one year trial of Moixa batteries at 11 Thameswey residential properties in Pirbright was successfully completed in October 2019. £373 was saved collectively in electricity bills over the course of the trial. The batteries remain in place.

Three Tesla power walls have been installed at Brookwood Farm in partnership with JoJu Solar. The system uses a centralised battery to store energy from multiple properties and could possibly be a first for this type of installation in the UK. The system is capable of exporting stored energy during periods of grid production that are higher in carbon.

ThamesWey's first wildlife competition successfully received seven entries from local schools across three age groups. The entries were judged by local entomologist Dr Andrew Halstead. There is potential for the competition to be run annually.

ThamesWey has recently changed its top-up electricity supplier which is now 100% renewable.

The planning application for Middle Walk incorporating green roofs and green walls has now been submitted.

7. Any Other Business

Councillor Davis talked through his Notice of Motion tabled for Council on 5 December 2019, calling for an annual conference for Woking residents and businesses to showcase local sustainability projects and solutions through guest speakers, displays etc. at a venue such as WWF Headquarters.

Extinction Rebellion had been in contact requesting the opportunity to present to Council. It was suggested that representatives of the group be invited to the next meeting of the Climate Change Working Group and be given 20 minutes for a presentation and questions/discussion afterwards. It was agreed that Democratic Services would reply to Extinction Rebellion on behalf of the Chairman.