

NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

HELD VIRTUALLY ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 VIA ZOOM

1. Discussion on Trees

The Group discussed tree planting and measures being taken to assist new trees to thrive. A number of factors affect success rates including the maturity of the tree at the time of planting (and associated stress levels to the plant) and weather conditions. The dry summer this year was noted.

A local trial of watering bags is underway. The bags are placed around the tree and filled with water once a week, allowing the roots to be targeted with a continual water supply. An increase in success rate was recorded with the use of this method so far.

Whilst tree planting on a small scale would not make a significant impact to climate change, the aesthetic benefits of tree planting were acknowledged. The discussion also considered the factors taken into account when deciding where to plant trees, selecting the right tree species for its position, the importance of trees in urban areas, the Woking Tree Trail, tree pests and diseases affecting the area (Oak Processionary Moth, Ash dieback). New opportunities associated with tree planting and replanting were also aired.

2. Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

An update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was presented to the group along with a document summarising progress against the priority actions identified for 2020/21. In further determining the emissions baseline for the Council's estate and operations, it was noted that this needed to be done in a phased approach due to the scale of the Council's property portfolio. It was reported that focus for the first quarter of 2020 was to determine the energy consumption of the top three largest leased buildings owned by the Council, Dukes Court, Export house and Orion Gate. The EPC ratings and energy consumption data for these buildings were noted. The potential impact of Covid 19 lockdown and social distancing restrictions on the ability to make year on year energy consumption and carbon footprint comparison across the Council estate was noted.

Action Surrey submitted a consortium bid on behalf of the majority of Surrey districts and boroughs under the BEIS Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme. The scheme seeks to upgrade the energy efficiency of low income, fuel poor households across England. Post meeting note: The bid was successful with BEIS awarding £6.2m to the project which has been named Green Jump Surrey.

ThamesWey continues to look at options to decarbonising energy supplies and is currently working with WSP consultants on hydraulic and techno-economic modelling of the district heating networks in Woking Town Centre. The modelling will consider the different blends of heating technologies to use, which will deliver the best outcomes in terms of efficiency, emissions, diversity, cost and other variables over the next 25 years. ThamesWey's selection of plant equipment will boost capacity at Poole Road, which will supply the Town Centre's existing and future developments.

The Planet Woking programme was officially launched at the Working Group with a demonstration of the new standalone website (www.planetwoking.co.uk). A launch video on

the objectives of the project is featured on the homepage and is being promoted via social media.

The website has a range of case studies and articles designed to engage local people and organisations to do what they can to make a positive difference. There is also information and activities to inspire your younger family members on the site's Little Planet Woking pages. Over the next few months, there will be a series of virtual talks based around a series of themes aimed at residents, schools and businesses. The first of these events will take place on Tuesday 20th October and will focus on "Home" and how making changes to our everyday activities can contribute to a sustainable Borough. The events will also offer residents the opportunity to feedback their ideas for what more the Council could be doing.

The Chairman highlighted the action to progress a large scale renewable energy plan for the Borough and sought approval for its acceleration, requesting that it be added to the Executive's work programme for next year. Whilst acknowledging the group's ambition it was noted that due to the current economic climate, the Council's priority must rest with social duty and so this item could not be put forward for consideration by the Executive at this time but would remain as an action on the CEAP.

Members were requested to:

RESOLVE that

- (i) the status reported be noted.

3. Natural Woking Update

The Group received a progress update on actions taken to deliver the Natural Woking biodiversity and green infrastructure plan.

It was noted that the recommended actions would be rolled forward to form the next three year action plan (2020/21 - 2022/23).

Natural England had renewed the Great Crested Newt (GCN) pilot organisational licence for a further two years. Officers will be reviewing changes made to the licence to ensure the Council and participating developers meeting the necessary requirements. In the coming year the project will benefit from new modelling and best practise learning from the wider national roll-out.

Woking Peregrine Project volunteers are exploring an alternative approach to publishing a book describing five years of the project.

It was noted the difference additional funding for Woking's heathland management, delivered through the Surrey Heathland Partnership, has made to helping reverse their decline.

Members welcomed the update and agreed to:

RESOLVE that:

- (i) the progress updates on the delivery of Natural Woking be noted.

Action Surrey Update

It was reported that Quarter 1 saw the lowest number of energy efficient improvements installed compared to the last Quarter. This was due to social distancing measures and subsequent lockdown which was introduced as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, this resulted in installations not being permitted for over half the quarter. Whilst there had been no installations carried out in Woking by Action Surrey's partner installers, sixteen referrals were made.

The number of enquiries had seen a significant increase with the government announcement of the Green Homes Grant, which was expected to be launched this month. Although grant details were not clear, it was expected that Quarter 2 would be a busy period for Action Surrey.

Action Surrey remained committed to working with Surrey County Council and partnering District and Borough local authorities to deliver ECO Flex in these areas.

4. ThamesWey Update

See section 2 for update on the bid to BEIS for the Green Jump Surrey project to be delivered by Action Surrey.

It was highlighted that two new developments would be connected to ThamesWey's Central Milton Keynes energy network, both projects support the ambition for more sustainable, low-carbon development, making it the biggest addition to ThamesWey's Milton Keynes activities in the last ten years.

6. Any Other Business

None.