

## Summary of the Climate Change Working Group Meeting – 12 March 2020

### 1. Presentation – Extinction Rebellion

Representatives from Extinction Rebellion (XR) Woking attended the meeting and made a spoken statement to members. XR requested that five areas be improved by the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG):

Area Identified	Actions
<b>Transparency</b>	<p>The summary minutes of the CCWG are now available online which XR welcomes but it is felt the group could go further. XR would like all action plans to be published online e.g. energy, transport, wildlife management, etc. Reasons for refusal of actions not pursued should also be published.</p> <p>XR also requests that additions and changes within the Climate Change plan are tracked and dated online.</p> <p>XR is willing to research/help.</p>
<b>Democracy</b>	<p>XR feels that ‘ordinary’ people also have solutions too. Climate change action should not be decided by one group of people. XR feels that the Council should hold Citizens Assemblies across the Borough enabling access to public opinion. Such forums could gather innovative ideas for climate change adaptation and mitigation. XR has assisted with Citizen Assemblies in Leeds, Nottingham, Oxford and Bristol.</p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>XR feels that the Council’s carbon neutral targets are too distant and that there should be more funding available. It is suggested that the CCWG set up a separate task group which actively campaigns for greater funding for enhanced action.</p>
<b>Woking Joint Committee</b>	<p>XR would like to see a stronger link between Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council and feels that the Joint Committee has an important role to play in the climate and ecological emergency. Requests for funding should be made through the Joint Committee for climate action.</p>
<b>The Council’s Pledge</b>	<p>XR feels that the Council should extend its 2030 target. Woking 2050’s original target of 80% reduction by 2050 is not enough. The Council should pledge to reduce to zero emissions by 2030 throughout the Borough.</p>

In response, the CCWG highlighted the Council’s long term environmental commitment with actions taken over the last 30 years in addressing energy efficiency, climate change and sustainability.

The Chairman thanked XR Woking for attending the meeting. It was agreed that a response to the group’s statement would be prepared by officers.

## **2. Carbon Reduction Action Plan Status Report**

The CCWG received an update on the priority carbon reduction actions agreed for implementation during 2020/21.

### **Carbon Footprint and Estates Management**

The Council's Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) submission for 2018/19 calculated a total of 5,006 tonnes of carbon dioxide (tCO<sub>2</sub>). However, there are limitations in using this data as it does not cover the following buildings which are included in the Council's adopted baseline definition:

- Any Council owned properties that are outside of the Borough;
- Buildings that are owned by the Council but are used by other organisations; and
- Council owned housing properties, managed by New Vision Homes (NVH).

The Council's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions report can provide information relating to NVH properties. Steps are being taken to begin to estimate the impact of leased properties. However, there are constraints to this including the scale of the task (over 550 leased properties). This will be undertaken in a phased approach, starting with the largest office complexes including Dukes Court, Export House and Orion Gate. Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of these buildings will be undertaken where they don't exist already. An EPC rating is accompanied with recommendations as to remedial actions required at each site to improve energy efficiency, and how much the work would cost.

It was noted that Estates Management would be managing the planting of trees worth £60,000 at Brookwood Cemetery during the course of 2020.

### **The Council's Corporate Estate**

Display Energy Certificates (DECs) for publicly accessible Council owned properties were last carried out in 2013/14 and have since expired. Officers plan to update these and review the recommended energy efficiency measures. These will be made available online.

### **Priority actions relating to ICT**

The Council is about to embark on a two year pilot Office 365 project. This could see greater flexibility in how the Council works for example with video conferencing capability and enhanced home working facilities which could help to reduce carbon associated with business travel. Furthermore, ICT is continuing to look at ways to reduce printing across business areas.

### **Staff Transport**

Existing car club arrangements for business mileage are being reviewed to secure improved environmental criteria and availability/efficiency for staff.

### **Planning Services**

A scoping exercise is to be undertaken of current planning policies, how they align with our climate emergency declaration, what they cover and what gaps might exist. This will enable officers to identify any opportunities for further developing planning policy or guidance to help deliver the Council's declaration and how best they could be achieved.

Planning guidance in the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document encourages developers to go further towards zero carbon housing if viable and technically feasible. The Government recently consulted on the Future Homes Standards for 2025 for new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency. The consultation closed early February 2020, with results expected early this summer.

## **Communications**

Officers continue to promote what the Council is doing to address climate change. Updates have been made to the Council's website including:

- A timeline of climate change and sustainability related activities and projects;
- The publication of summary minutes of the Climate Change Working Group; and
- Information on the definition of the Council's Climate Emergency declaration including agreed baselines.

### **3. Natural Woking Progress Update**

A progress report on the Natural Woking Action Plan 2019-2021 was presented to the CCWG. The update included information on the extensive expansion of heathland management on the Council's sites that had been undertaken this year through the expanded Countryside Management work programme.

Funding for additional Countryside Management works 2020/21 – 2022/23 has now been approved through the Council's Investment Programme. The priorities previously agreed by the CCWG can therefore be further developed over the coming three years.

### **4. Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LWCIP) for Woking**

The development of LCWIPs forms a part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) current £390m five year investment strategy for cycling and walking (2016/17 – 2020/21) to help deliver the Government's aim of doubling cycling by 2025. Woking Town Centre was selected to pilot the first LCWIP for Surrey. Identified priority cycling/walking routes in the Borough were outlined with potential improvement measures which could increase the uptake of cycling and walking, especially for shorter journeys.

The group noted the need for safe cycling in shared spaces. In particular, concern around speeding cyclists, specifically on off-road routes such as the Basingstoke Canal, was discussed.

However, in the context of priority routes, the importance of the Canal towpath was highlighted as a key east / west route through the Borough which led to discussion around the need for the towpath to be widened. The use of calming measures, should the towpath be widened, would need to be considered to ensure safe shared use.

In conclusion, the CCWG supported the submission of the draft LCWIP to the DfT, by the end of March 2020, with the inclusion of a recommendation that the Basingstoke Canal towpath be widened to fully enable this as a priority route with appropriate calming measures.

## **5. Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation**

The CCWG noted the wind energy feasibility study that was commissioned by the Council back in 2007 and produced by RPS Energy. The Chairman requested that consideration be given again to large scale renewable energy generation. It was requested that a large scale renewable energy plan be worked up as soon as practically possible, detailing how wind energy could be funded across the Borough and how it could be complemented with solar energy.

## **6. ThamesWey Update**

### **Minimum Energy Standard Regulations (MEES)**

New Minimum Energy Standard (MEES) Regulations are expected to take effect from 1 April 2020. All residential rental properties will need to be a minimum of EPC rating “E” or risk being in breach of the MEES Regulations. Landlord enforcement is the responsibility of Woking Borough Council. ThamesWey will raise awareness of these changes among landlords across the Action Surrey network.

### **Environmental Policy Statement (EPS)**

ThamesWey has published its EPS as part of its implementation of the ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management System.

### **Renewable Heat Project Paper**

ThamesWey proposes to deliver a project within Woking Borough for the installation of renewable heating systems in domestic settings. The project would include both air and ground source heat pumps which are eligible for the Renewable Heat Incentive. ThamesWey would offer each household a funding contribution towards the cost on the installation up to a maximum of £3,000.

### **Plastic-free Market Walk**

Initially this project focused on reducing the amount of single-use plastic takeaway containers in conjunction with Market Walk stall holders. The project is now being expanded to various takeaway outlets within the Town Centre, encouraging the use of reusable containers. ThamesWey has purchased 500 reusable lunch boxes made from bamboo and wheat fibre. The intention is to distribute these through large employers in the Town Centre to target regular customers of lunch time takeaway food outlets. A small financial contribution to Woking Foodbank is requested in return for each container. Several large companies have been approached and have expressed interest in the initiative, including Woking Borough Council.

## **7. Action Surrey Update**

Over the last quarter, Action Surrey helped ten households in Woking Borough to install energy efficiency improvements at a total cost of £3,400, resulting in an estimated CO2 saving of 5.6 tonnes/year. The following Surrey wide activities were recorded:

- 404 residents contacted Action Surrey
- 210 residents referred to one or more installers
- 484 referrals made

- 43 installations helping save an estimated 27 tonnes CO2 per year
- Total cost of works of £21,703.

ECO Flex measures across the districts and boroughs continue to be delivered and managed by Action Surrey.

The CCWG was shown a sample Radbot - a smart Thermostatic Radiator Valve (TRV) for a domestic setting. It is designed to reduce the amount of energy wasted heating empty rooms. The Radbot learns the occupancy of individual rooms and then heats each room only when occupied. Action Surrey has been working with Radbot to identify eligible volunteer households to take part in a demonstration scheme. The volunteer households would have the Radbot installed free of charge along with the monitoring equipment. At the end of the trial, the monitoring results would be shared with Ofgem in the hope that the Radbot could become a fully accredited ECO Measure. The trial is targeted at those living in fuel poverty where an energy bill saving will be of greater benefit.