

**CLIMATE CHANGE PANEL
9 JUNE 2021
5.00 - 7.25 PM**



Present:

Councillors Virgo (Chairman), Mrs Hayes MBE, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Leake, Mossom, Temperton and Tullett

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

Also Present:

Councillors Bettison OBE, Harrison and Turrell

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Tony Virgo be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2021/22.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Tina McKenzie Boyle be appointed Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2021/22.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent Items of Business

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

5. Chairman's Introduction

Councillor Virgo introduced the Climate Change Panel, which aimed to be a leading voice in the community on all matters affecting Climate Change.

It was suggested that the Panel's thoughts should relate to the following headings:

- Energy
- Highways and Transport
- Biodiversity and Environment

Communication from the Panel would be critical in getting the message out.

Future meetings would invite experts in the field, and Councillors carrying out work relating to climate change.

Panel members introduced themselves and explained their personal reasons for wanting to join the Panel, and the Chairman introduced officers who would be delivering the work.

6. **Review of Terms of Reference**

It was clarified that the Panel would make recommendations to the relevant Executive member to put onto the Climate Change Action Plan, which would be monitored by Council. The Panel would be given a quarterly update on the action plan and progress against its priorities.

If the Panel required an update on a particular area of the action plan, the project sponsor could be invited to give an update.

It was clarified that the action plan would not be RAG rated.

An amendment to the Terms of Reference was suggested to read 'This is an advisory body to the Council through the Exec Members who will make recommendations to the Executive as appropriate'. Councillor Leake agreed to send this proposal to the Executive members and Councillor Virgo for their consideration.

7. **Introduction from Executive Director: Delivery and update on action plan**

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery presented an update on the Climate Change Strategy.

Kevin recommended that Panel members and members of the public read the Climate Change Strategy which set out the areas of work which the Council had been doing thus far, and the planned work for the future.

During the first COVID lockdown, there had been significant national reductions in energy and carbon usage. During Summer 2020, the UK went coal-free for the first time, and the decarbonisation of the grid continued to be developed nationally. During lockdown, people were driving less and walking more, and felt that they had made sustainable changes to their lifestyle which could be continued. However, since the lockdowns had eased, the population had generally returned to business as usual.

Members had adopted the Climate Change action plan at full council, and asked for measurable but ambitious annual targets. A report on progress would be brought to full Council on an annual basis.

The Climate Change strategy had four pillars: working with partners, working with schools and young people, preserving COVID benefits and preserving the natural environment. It was recognised that the majority of change needed to happen in areas over which the Council did not have control, but the Council could play a role in community leadership, lobbying and promoting.

The update on the action plan for this quarter covered the following highlights:

- The Executive had agreed the Climate Change Advisory Panel.
- Officers had met with the Bracknell Industrial District (BID) to discuss how local business could lead on climate change.
- The Berkshire Leaders had agreed a strategy for Strongs Heath to focus on climate change options, for example solar power.
- A new communications manager had been appointed for the food waste communications.
- The Cambian Partnership had adopted environmental standards for the development of Coopers Hill and Market Street.
- The Council's decision making report template had been update to capture the impact on climate change.

- A sustainably energy officer had been appointed, with the focus on retrofitting buildings in the community and replacing boilers. Additional external funding had been received for this work.
- Bracknell Forest had the highest food waste recycling figures across the re3 partnership.
- An anaerobic digester plan was being investigated for the borough, and the Panel was asked to support an £11k viability study into this project.
- A new energy and services manager had been appointed to focus on decarbonising the Council's power. All the Council's electricity was now carbon neutral, and the Council's carbon emissions had halved across the year.
- There had been two successful bids for government funding for decarbonisation and retrofitting of Council buildings, which would be used across the schools' estate. The boilers at Owlsmoor Community Centre and Sandhurst Library were also being replaced.
- Work was ongoing with taxis to reduce emissions, particularly around home to school transport vehicles.
- The Public Protection Partnership had done work to stop vehicle idling outside schools and in other sensitive areas. Funding from DEFRA had been sources to look at further clean air projects.
- The Transport Strategy Manager was looking into electric vehicle charging and bikeability schemes.
- LED lighting on roads and subways had already been delivered.

Kevin agreed to add Panel members to the internal Climate Change Yammer site for updates.

In response to discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

- While the Council itself was on target to be net 0 before the Government's target of 2050, it was a matter of encouraging the community to reduce their emissions.
- The data on climate change would be taken from DEFRA data which was released on a biennial basis, and Panel members commented that DEFRA's data was not collected often enough.
- Panel members requested that a link to the Climate Change strategy be attached to all future agendas.
- While the Panel were supportive of the principle of an anaerobic digester, Panel members were cautious as they did not feel that they had all the details before them. Members asked for the detail behind the proposal to be circulated separately. **(Action: Kevin Gibbs)**
- The Council had chosen a green energy supplier, making it carbon neutral. It was noted that if an organisation was to change supplier to one that provided green energy, this was an easy way of reducing their emissions.
- Panel members requested that the homepage of the Council's website be amended to include a link to the Climate Change strategy, however it was clear that this against the style guide, set out by digital service.
- Panel members queried where the biggest wins could be made in the borough around carbon reduction, such as areas of heavy industry.

8. **Waste & Recycling update**

Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services gave an update on the food waste scheme.

Initial figures for March/April 2021 since the food waste scheme started showed that Bracknell Forest had reached 56% total recycling. Some nearby authorities were performing better than this, but it was recognised that it was still early days for the scheme. Residents had embraced the food waste scheme, which had a 90% participation rate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel looking at food waste recycling for flats was ongoing.

Members suggested a report at a future meeting or to the appropriate Overview & Scrutiny Panel to explain the difference in recycling rates between Bracknell Forest and other authorities who had higher recycling rates.

9. **Priorities for the Panel & getting the message out**

The priorities for the Panel were discussed under other agenda items.

10. **Any Other Business**

The Panel requested a presentation from Andrew Hunter or Max Baker at a future meeting on planning policies, the importance of having up to date policies, the Local Plan and any areas in planning policy which will impact on climate change. An example was the size of recycling spaces in apartment blocks to accommodate food waste recycling facilities.

Electric vehicle charging was also suggested as an item for a future agenda.

CHAIRMAN