

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY PANEL
26 JANUARY 2023
5.00 - 7.00 PM**



Present:

Councillors Virgo, Mrs Hayes MBE, Leake and Temperton

Present Virtually:

Councillors Mrs McKenzie-Boyle and Mossom

Also Present:

Councillor Brown

Also Present Virtually:

Councillors Bettison OBE and Turrell

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes

Detailed sessions regarding grants had been held at previous meetings but any specific questions could be answered after the presentations.

Gareth Jones confirmed that all Housing Associations had been engaged with, and the Energy Officer had confirmed that they were working with everyone that they were aware that they should be working with.

The minutes of the Climate Change Advisory Panel on 10 October 2022 were approved.

20. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

21. Bracknell Forest Council Annual Climate Change Strategy Update & National Management Trainee Placement Progress

The Advisory Panel received a presentation from Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, on the Council's Annual Climate Change Strategy Q1 and Q2 2022/23.

The first annual report on progress had been produced, this was a comprehensive report and sat along side the Climate Change Strategy on the website. This would be produced annually.

Key findings within the report was that the Council's CO₂e emissions continued to drop year on year and within Bracknell Forest Borough there had been a 41.5% reduction since monitoring had begun in 2005 by Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy department data (BEIS).

At the 9 March 2023 meeting Corporate Property would be providing an update on the £1M retrofit projects and there would be a Programme plan end of Q3 update.

From June 2023 the forward plan for the Climate Change Advisory Panel consisted of the below, but items would be added and updated as required.

- London Road (EV charging hub).
- Member feedback on the visits to Oxford City EV SuperHub and Basildon EV charging hub.
- BFC Programme plan end of Q4 update report.
- Review draft of the Climate Change Strategy progress summary.
- End of NMT placement update.
- Climate Emergency Action Scorecards update.

Across the Council a number of teams were supporting Climate Change projects:

Public Health funding was supporting a number of climate change programmes. Projects include the Eco Rewards Behaviour Change Incentive Scheme (encouraging active modes of travel), Green and Active Heroes (engaging volunteers in outdoor biodiversity / green space activities); Improving Air Quality (funding monitoring equipment and resources); and reducing the impacts of poor housing.

Business engagement had begun by the Climate Change team by signposting support for local businesses interested in starting their own climate change mitigation journey.

An Energy Group had been set up by Officer's responsible for managing council facilities to specifically look at projects aimed at reducing levels of utility consumption and further lowering the Councils carbon footprint. The group had already met a couple of times.

A feasibility study has been completed for the creation of an EV charging hub with supporting dwell-time facilities and renewable power generation and storage via a solarPV farm and battery cells at London Road (Strong's Heath) site. The work on this was continuing with hope that a planning application would come forward in due course.

As of June 2022 all Local Authorities had adopted updated Building Regulations (part S) which now included the mandatory provision of EV charging points on all new residential developments.

Once adopted the new Local Plan would tighten the expectations placed upon developers (both residential and commercial) with regard to the provision of on-site renewable generation and overall energy efficiency.

The new draft housing strategy would include the Council's ambitions to ensure that homes within the borough are as energy efficient as possible. This would include working with partners such as Silva Homes who will be bidding for Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding in Q3 to enable their own efforts to retrofit their housing stock.

The Advisory Panel was reminded that Strategy was supported by an Action Plan covering the full breadth of council services and that there were currently 45 live projects. These were reported on quarterly via an Internal Officer Board which was

Chaired by Damian James and then oversight given to the Climate Change Advisory Panel.

Projects across the Council included Wildflower Biodiversity, Green and Active Heroes, the launch of the My Journey App, Community EV charging hubs, Love to Ride, new EV Pool cars added to the Council's fleet, reducing the carbon footprint of highway maintenance, Greening our Waste / improving our recycling, Domestic Energy Efficiency, Schools' Climate Change Conference and the Green Giants Festival.

The Comms Team had also been working hard with 18 climate change related stories issued between April and September 2022. There had also been a Councillors' Climate Change newsletter launched and a regular climate change stories slot secured in Town and Country. The team were currently developing behavioural tips and tricks for residents.

Sebastian Wright, who was one of the National Graduate Trainees, on the National Graduate Development Programme, attended the Advisory Panel to provide an update on the work he was undertaking on his placement in the Climate Change team which ran until the end of March 2023.

There were 3 key elements being undertaken by Sebastian during his placement.

These were:

- Emissions trajectory work
- Parish and town council engagement
- Climate change business strategy and event

Sebastian explained how emissions were measured and tracked, these were:

- Scope 1 (direct emissions)
- Scope 2 (electricity)
- Scope 3 – but only emissions linked to water use.

Scopes 1 and 2 were measured and reported by the Council, but Scope 3 was currently unreported, except for water. These were likely to be a significant element of the Council's emissions and there was likely to be increasing pressure to report this in future. However, this was much harder to measure and project but during the placement it was going to be investigated how this could or might be done.

Sebastian was also working on a project to project future emissions and estimate how emissions may change in the future under different scenarios and providing options for interim targets. It was likely that there could be a number of emissions that may not be able to be mitigated by the 2050 target, and therefore there may be a need to look at how those could be offset.

Engagement had been undertaken with the Town and Parish Councils to build better relationships with Town and Parish councils around climate change and to help the Town and Parish councils to measure their scope 1 and 2 emissions, facilitate co-operation between Town and Parish councils on climate change and to share best practice and identify other opportunities for collaboration.

As a result of the 2021 business survey, it had been highlighted that very few businesses had committed to a date to become net zero. 2022 survey results were

expected in February 2023, which included further questions to gauge the scale of Climate Change engagement by local businesses. However, the team were aware that businesses were under a lot of existing pressures due to the current economic pressures. Sebastian aimed to create a strategy for business engagement support and to run a business climate event post the May elections to work more closely with key partners.

As a result of the groups comments and questions, the following points were made:

- There were set standards and procedures for measuring which had been provide to Town and Parish Councils. But there was a degree of variation from company to company.
- There were several issues around emissions from ships, this was not something being looked at directly by the team.
- The decrease in emissions was due to the decrease in electricity being used alongside some of the electricity in the grid being greener. This was the council's data use not the Boroughs emissions.
- The language around the Council and the Borough emissions would be looked at to avoid confusion and made clearer.
- Work was being undertaken with a number of housing associations; it was important that this be highlighted.
- The closest working relationship was with SILVA Homes.
- Crowthorne Parish Council had climate change within its 3-year strategy, and Sebastian had met with Liz in Crowthorne, and they had taken up the offer to help with measuring emissions.
- The Public Protection Partnership had received funding to measure air quality in sensitive spots across the Borough. With data expected in the following months. Posters and leaflets regarding idling would be appearing in the coming weeks.
- A bumper sticker competition had been run in schools.
- The Green Homes Grant from the government had been successful the first time, but not the second time. A Berkshire wide bid had been successful with £80k received and homes had been identified, which had meant 12 homes had received retrospective work. Outcome data was still being awaited. The third bid had finally been successful, as part of a Berkshire wide bid in the Autumn, which had meant some rapid work up until Christmas to identify suitable housing for retrofitting. Those houses had been handed over to the contractor with work current being undertaken.
- A Home Upgrade Grant had been applied for, for off gas grid housing, and Bracknell had applied as part of a Berkshire Wide bid. The outcome for this grant was still pending.
- The heating within the Councils building had been reduced but being mindful of the regulations. The lighting grid had also been slightly decreased.
- It was likely that due to the economic issues that 2022 winters emissions will be lower.
- Idling action could be enforced if required.
- Idling issues could be combated by children walking to school.
- It was discussed that schools could be invited to participate in the Advisory Panel in the future.
- The Council would love to see more bumble bee signs around the Borough.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their presentations and contributions.

22. **Walking and Cycling Strategy**

Neil Matthews, Assistant Director: Highways and Transport, attended the meeting to give a presentation on the Council's presentation Walking and Cycling Strategy.

Arising from the presentation, the following points were noted:

- There were 530km of footway and over 100km of traffic free cycle way in the Borough. With much of that was in urban areas, specifically in the Town Centre which was planned when Bracknell was a new town such as the underpasses which would be hard to retrofit.
- The National Cycle Network 422 ran across the Borough and linked Bracknell to West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Ascot.
- There were over 100 controlled crossings for pedestrians and cyclists with a number of schemes being developed each year.
- 3000 school children had received cycle training in the past 5 years, under the bike ability scheme, this was funded by the Government and offered to all year 6 pupils.
- Over the past 10 years annual monitoring surveys suggested that there was an increase in cycling of 9% and an increase in walking of 59%. This was a snapshot of the Borough.
- The Government introduced the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which was to show how investment and improvement would be made in cycling and walking over the future years. This strategy was to be undertaken by Local Governments via Local Transport Plans and Walking and Cycling Strategies to deliver a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan.
- A key aspiration was that the majority of short trips would be undertaken by foot or bike.
- Active Travel England was introduced to govern the funding that it was going to provide.
- Policy TP8 in Bracknell Forest Councils Local Transport Plan detailed what the Council had committed to undertake for cycling and walking within the Borough.
- The capital programme delivered a number of schemes across the Borough.
- Increased connectivity had been made through strategic transport improvements to the A329/A3095/A322 so that motor transport didn't become dominate in those schemes.
- It was key to build on the strong urban network.
- Walking and cycling connectivity were a key consideration for new development proposals, especially larger sites. It was important that they were high quality and direct links.
- Developer funding contributions could be taken to support wider off site improvements.
- There were obligations on developers to create travel plans which sought to promote sustainable travel.
- Green infrastructure was also important, with Swinley Forest being a good example of this.
- Developers were realising the importance of green infrastructure as part of new developments as it made them attractive to residents.
- Pedestrian road safety was rolled out to key stage 1 and 2 pupils.
- The team analysed any traffic accident data provided by the police and looked to tackle any road safety issues.
- Secure cycling parking was key as locations.

- There were 6 different funding schemes that came into the council that could be used for cycling and walking which could be used for the plan, emerging demands, safety improvements and development opportunities.
- LCWIP was a Government initiative to identify evidence based, high quality cycling and walking improvements at a local level. It used gap analyses and assessments of likely use and benefit.
- The Council's current Cycling and Walking plan only covered urban areas and was currently being reviewed to cover the whole borough.
- Engagement on the new plan had started with residents and Town and Parish Councils.
- An online platform had been introduced which allowed residents to pinpoint any issues in the Borough. So far there had been 2653 contributions from 525 respondents.
- The comments were wide ranging from general maintenance to suggestions regarding new infrastructure. These responses were being analysed and alongside an engineering assessment would inform the new LCWIP. It was hoped this would trigger new funding from the Government but would also assist in aligning the councils funding.
- The current infrastructure was underused in many places.
- There were a range of promotional videos available on the Council's website.
- A number of circular walking and cycling routes had been designed across the Borough were promoted on the Council's website. These were colour coded with the corresponding stickers on lampposts on the routes to be followed.
- Eco Rewards was an initiative for children to walk and cycle to school. With miles equalling prizes and discounts. Love to Cycle was a similar scheme. With both being very popular with schools signing up to be involved.
- My Journey had recently been set up which was a personalised travel journey portal. It had gone live but was still being refined. Start and finish points of journeys could be entered and the different modes of how to make that journey were presented to the user. It was hoped that the Council's infrastructure could be mapped into the portal – this was still being refined.

Arising from the presentation the following points were raised:

- The strategy was easy to read for residents and members.
- It had been commented that it was hard to find cycle lanes in Bracknell, however it would be hard to colour code all the routes.
- All routes were available on the Councils website.
- Reading had closed roads around schools to promote more cycling. This was something that had been undertaken in large cities. The Boroughs schools were well connected in a majority of cases. There was less connectivity to the rural schools.
- This was not something that could be discounted but would need to be looked at closely on a case-by-case basis.
- There was not a target or governmental target to get more people on bikes. This was not something that could be measured easily, nor for walking.
- There was a shift on how the capital programme be spent towards sustainable travel.
- How travel data would be collected in the future was something that was being looked at by the Government. Travel data for cars was collected by Bluetooth, it was expected that travel data for cycling and walking could be done the same way as the majority of people had a phone on them which could track anonymised journeys.
- Cycling clubs could be promoted. Love to Ride was a form of this and you could club together with other people.

- Cycling and walking in the winter months was always a challenge.
- There were challenges with cycling in the rural areas where the roads were narrower, and people were often more wary of cycling. More broader thinking was required for these areas.
- Walking in the Borough was a pleasant experience.
- Working with the Parish and Town Councils was key to make use of opportunities.
- Lots of promotion of My Journey was underway, with aspirations that this also be available via app.
- Safe storage for expensive bikes was key for those who cycled leisurely to also cycle to shops or to commute.
- There were 350 cycle hoops in Bracknell Town Centre. These were securely attached to the ground and had CCTV.
- The train station had bike racks to save space.
- The bike storage in the Borough was not overused.
- Neil would look at the cycling crime data in the borough and see if there was an issue with leaving bikes, or whether this was just a perception.
- Roundabouts were difficult for a car, cycle and pedestrian mix, it was important to find a safe solution where users didn't meet together.
- The mindset of road users in Europe was different than in the UK which was somewhat behind.
- Bracknell Town Centre was a pedestrian zone, with cycling not permitted. There was signage throughout and work had been undertaken with the Lexicon to try and combat those that did cycle through; however the Lexicon staff didn't have powers to enforce unlike the police.
- There were compromises that could be used in the rural areas for lit pathways.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their presentations and contributions.

CHAIRMAN