

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY PANEL  
10 OCTOBER 2022  
4.30 - 6.48 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

**Also Present:**

Councillor Bettison OBE

**10. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**11. Minutes**

The minutes of the Climate Change Advisory Panel on 8 June 2022 were approved.

Arising from the minutes, it was noted that latest Borough-wide emissions statistics had been included in the annual report and referred to BEIS estimates for 2019.

The 2020 statistics were now available and the overall figure for the borough had dropped again from 426.1kT to 392.8kT (a 33.3kT drop). In addition, the emissions per capita dropped from 3.5 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> to 3.2 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>.

However, a note of caution was added as March 2020 saw the first wave of COVID-19 and the subsequent national clampdowns on travel and (certain) businesses opening throughout the rest of the year. The reduction should therefore be taken in that context.

**12. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

**13. Climate Change Officer**

Faith Everett, Bracknell Forest Council's new Climate Change Officer, attended the meeting to give a presentation on Climate Change and the Cost of Living

The presentation set out the bigger picture for Bracknell residents and signposted some things that may help ease the pressure as well as detailing some ideas that all could be done everyday to help make a difference.

Arising from the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Climate change amplified the growing cost of living crisis.
- The heatwave in summer 2022 had likely increased many peoples water bills.

- It had been stated that the cost of climate change was 6 times higher than originally anticipated.
- In September 2022, 91% of UK households reported an increase in their cost of living.
- The household mainly attributed the increase to the rise in the cost of food, rising utility bills, and a sharp increase in the cost of fuel.
- Weekly food shopping for an average family of four had increased by 8% compared to the same time last year.
- The average energy bill per month for a 3-bed home was likely to increase from £164 to £296.
- The average price of fuel was £1.92 per litre for fuel and £1.99 per litre for diesel, this was 40-45% higher than the previous year.
- Poel were paying 64% more at the pump in July 2022 then they were in January 2022.
- The impact wasn't a one size fits all and impacted people differently.
- Recent research showed that domestic gas use contributed to 70% of domestic emissions across Bracknell.
- Advice and support on energy efficiency at home including warm safe and well Public Health funding could all be found on the Bracknell Forest Council website.
- 10% of household heat loss was through poor windows.
- There were a number of energy supplier grants and schemes and could be found on the citizens advice website.
- The transport sector was one of the highest contributors to local carbon emissions and also one of the sectors with the highest rate of inflation.
- In Bracknell Forest, transport made up 35% of the borough's total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Love to Ride and Eco Rewards were free active travel sign up platforms which rewarded sustainable travel choices.
- The Council was currently installing 32 additional EV charging points at local neighbourhood hubs.
- The Council was encouraging residents to consider alternative methods of travel with active commuting and flexible working policies.
- The way food contributed to climate change was broad, through production and processing of food, food delivery miles, packaging, storage and preparation, and food waste.
- The demand for the local food bank had double since this time last year.
- The Council were developing a climate change 'daily tips' section on the website to encourage behaviour change and help save residents money.
- The Council had a successful food waste scheme across the borough. This had since been extended to 25% of flats in the borough and since starting had divert almost 6000 tonnes of food waste from landfill.
- BFC comms and marketing were helping to encourage individual actions as some of the most effective ways to tackle rising emissions that could also impact rising costs.
- £900k had been secured via the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 1A, funding improving energy efficiency within hard to heat homes. This had delivered 123 retrofit measures to 99 resident's homes.

Arising from the presentation the following points were raised:

- Faith felt that joined up working, building networks and working together across the borough was important to tackle climate change.
- A flexible dynamic approach was needed.

- 300 flats were currently part of the food waste scheme. There was a criterion that flats needed to meet in order to be part of the scheme. 1800 flats would eventually be part of the scheme, which was 20% of the flats in the borough.
- Olio app had been circulated by Cllr Mrs Temperton in Great Hollands, and the uptake had been fantastic, and was really working well in Great Hollands.
- Cllr Mrs Temperton would circulate with Cllr Mrs Hayes and Faith what had been included in Great Hollands Matters in regard to the Olio app.
- Royal Berkshire Fire Service would be providing a Winter hub in Crowthorne Fire Station.
- Winter Hubs were outside of the Climate Change remit, but work was being undertaken in the Council by Katie Flint.
- The website was being redesigned, and the timeframe for the daily tip was currently unknown.
- It was unlikely the Council would supply generators in a black out. Kevin Gibbs would look at the emergency planning too see what was detailed.
- Sandhurst Community Centre were looking into opening their building for vulnerable people with no heating.
- The Council had a list of vulnerable people within the borough with medical infrastructure at home. So, the Council would be able to act quickly in a black out situation.

#### 14. **Head of Climate Change's Update**

Gareth Jones, Head of Climate Change and Sustainable Living presented the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD 2 and 3) update.

Gareth provided an insight on the funding that is available and has been available for retrofitting homes.

Green Homes Grant funding was the general overarching bracket and BEIS distributed the money. Bracknell Forest Council had previous success with LAD 1A which had allowed for retrofitting in a number of properties across the borough. The Green Homes Grant funding covered a range of retrofitting including wall/loft/floor insulation, solar panels and heat pumps. The funding focused on homes that were hard to heat, generally with an E, F or G energy efficiency rating and also those on low levels of income, which tended to be those households with less than £30k disposable income after rent or mortgage payments.

The most recent batches of funding were LAD 2 and LAD 3, with the latter also being referred to as sustainable warmth. Both of these projects had slightly different delivery than LAD 1.

For LAD 2 the council had initially been allocated £276k for work within Bracknell Forest Council, this was part of a Berkshire wide bid. However, there was a delay in arranging the Managing Agent for the scheme, and were only in place in December 2021, when the scheme was due to start in April 2021. As a consequence of the delay, Bracknell Forest Councils allocation was reduced to £87k. Bracknell Forest Council identified 32 potential properties, and these were put forward to the managing agent to consider. Following surveys 14 homes had been put forward for possible works allocation subject to the procurement of contractors. Gareth advised that of those 14, 8 were definitely having work done, 4 were waiting for further information and 2 had unfortunately been cancelled.

For Sustainable Warmth (LAD 3) the scheme was supposed to start in April 2022 and run for a calendar year. Bracknell Forest Council had bid for a standalone grant which

was an unsuccessful bid of £1.3m. However, after the Council received notification of the unsuccessful bid GSEEH proposed a Berkshire wide approach as they had bid successfully across Berkshire. Bracknell Forest Council expressed an interest that they wished to be included, and confirmation had been received in the last week that this had been granted. The scheme had been slow and work had only started in the last month, and late inclusion hadn't hindered the council too much, however timescales were tight with work needing to be finished by March 2023. Funding included a budget of £10k to support marketing efforts which needed to be undertaken in October.

GSEEH were now reporting improvement in their staff resourcing which at times had impacted the schemes. At one point there was a delay of 12 weeks from identification by the Council to the first survey.

The survey led to an advised 'shopping list' of retrofit works required which could be one, two or three different improvements. A procurement exercise was then undertaken, with 3 contractors able to bid for each improvement, and were able to bid for more than one. The works was then agreed if it fell within budget. It was quite complicated as households could have more than one contractor working within their house.

The Council were still waiting on confirmation of LAD 2 successes and with the news of inclusion to Sustainable Warmth (LAD 3) targeted marketing was about to commence.

Looking forward Hazel Hill had a database of properties in the council which showed the energy rating of around 95% of homes in the borough which allowed for targeted marking for the management agent.

Home Upgrade Grant Funding was now being promoted as Sustainable Warmth was nearing an end, wave 2 was open now until the end of October and Bracknell Forest Council would express an interest in funding.

SILVA Homes were currently bidding for wave 2 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which was a separate funding stream route. It was unsure what this bid would be, but a lot of work had been undertaken over the summer.

During a period of discussion, the following points were made, and answers were given:

- GSEEH were an organisation appointment by the Government.
- Each of the hubs were responsible for specific areas of the country.
- The council acted as signposting in the schemes
- There had been some confusing regarding the contractors in LAD 2 but going onto LAD 3 the process should be better and resident's questions would be better answered going forward.
- Each funding scheme differed under eligibility criteria, it was a generalisation that most targeted homes were energy inefficient and fell under a E,F or G rating. An up to day EPC certificate for the home would also be looked out. For financial eligibility, households would need to have a take home income of circa £30k per annum after mortgage or rent payments.
- The database contained information from a number of sources and was a live database. Hazel also had access to a national database and was able to take information directly from residents.

- Residents are advised to take a fabric first approach and make their houses as airtight as possible. Then they can look in to heating systems such as solar panels or heat pumps.
- The energy efficiency pages on the Bracknell Forest Council website were a very good starting point and could be found under the housing section.
- Gareth was unsure if all housing associations were spoken too and would check the interactions with Hazel and would report back.

## 15. **Octopus Energy**

Simon Connelly from Octopus Energy joined the meeting to provide an industry view on the current energy crisis.

Simon provided an insight into Octopus's Energy Saving Sessions or Blackout Busters which had been launched today. Anyone who had a smart meter was able to apply for the trial scheme which had also tentatively been run the previous year. It was based on a first come first services but was hoped it would be rolled out further in the future. The reason of the scheme was to encourage users to shift their energy outside of peak times, to take pressure away from the national grid. It would hope the scheme would help with pinch points in usage and sway from any negative impact's energy peak usage may have, such as outages which had been mentioned by the Government and media.

It was a two-pronged attack, looking to reduce amount of pinch points during the winter and help drive down the high wholesale market cost of energy. The unit rate had been so high over the past few years due to the demand on the National Grid. 40% of the distribution operator was gas powered, so the more usage could be drive down the less gas the power stations would need to use, which would have a positive knock on effect.

During a period of discussion, the following points were made and answers were given:

- By industry standards at least once a year payment adequacy reviews had to be run on customer accounts. This would look at the estimated annual energy consumptions which were generated by historical readings. The users monthly direct debit payments were then based on that annual estimated consumption. This provided a clear and transparent estimation to customer on how much their payments were likely to be.
- Octopus ran payment adequacy reviews more than once a year, as they liked to be transparent and honest with their customers.
- Any negative amounts would trigger an automatic payment adequacy review, and the same if an account had too much credit.
- The average monthly cost for a family of four was around £200-£300 a month on energy usage.
- Every household and home were different.
- Octopus had over 5million customers.
- The Government scheme was for every household to have a smart meter by 2025.
- It was advised to set your boiler at a certain temperature.
- Octopus were putting a lot of investment into air source heat pumps and had recently bought an air source heat pump company and were trying to drive down the cost and the side of the pumps.
- Many customers were hesitant about smart meters due to the misinformation out there. Many people believed that companies controlled the energy through

the smart meter which wasn't possible. The smart meter communicated energy usage remotely to the companies.

- The only way companies know if your home or away is through your energy usage. It would not be used to track people.
- Data was used from smart meters to help bill people correctly and show energy usage.
- Every direct debit came with a direct debit guarantee. By law 10 days' notice had to be given for any changes, Octopus gave 30 days to allow conversation with customers.
- Every generation of smart meter was improving. Companies had to be careful with full access to smart meters.
- Octopus were currently developing their own in-house display units.
- Economy 7 meters were still used by Octopus and was available if people wished to request them.
- If people had the capacity to have battery storage, then that was encouraged.
- Octopus always encouraged customers to speak to them directly about tariffs.
- Tariffs were governed by the price cap, which would keep being increased.
- The energy bill support scheme offered support to everyone and would be split into 6 monthly payments until March.

## 16. **Executive Member for the Environment's Update**

Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes, Executive Member for the Environment and Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director of Resources presented the Climate Change Strategy Update.

The presentation would cover:

- London Road EV Charging hub update
- EV Charging Hub Update – Oxford Electric Vehicle Superhub
- Recycling Roadshows
- EV Chargers Roll Out
- Running out of Time – Baton Relay

### **London Road EV Charging Hub**

The initial work had been undertaken with Planning, and an appraisal had been undertaken for the delivery of solar generation on the site. The site was just off the A329 and provided a good background to capture electric vehicle movement. There were 3 petrol forecourts within a close radius of the site. The plan was for a charging hub plus a small retail unit and café. To power the hub, it was hoped a solar array would be installed on the site and onsite battery storage, to take the pressure away from the grid. It was planned to be like a petrol station but for electric vehicles.

### **EV Charging Hub Update – Oxford Electric Vehicle Superhub**

Members visited the Electric Vehicle Superhub on Thursday 1 September 2022. The site had a charging up and onsite battery storage. The Council would be working in partnership with Oxford City Council with moving the plans forward for the London Road site. Councillor Mrs Hayes had held a site visit with the local MPs and ministers. A further visit to a site in Essex was planned.

### **Recycling Roadshow**

The Recycling roadshow had taken place on the 10 September 2022. The final tonnage from the roadshow was 1.7 tonnes WEEE and 1.6 tonnes clothing which were diverted from landfill. A campaign for recycling batteries had been launched anywhere a battery had been purchased they could be recycled. The next roadshow would be in March 2023.

### **EV Chargers Roll Out**

Warfield Park had made a significant investment in EV charging points for all its rented homes in Harvest Lea and 15 charging points had been put on site. Over the next three years there were plans for 82 new park homes, all would have EV charging points.

The 32 proposed charging points across the Borough would be installed by the end of the month. These were part of a government funded scheme which would typically recouple costs over a 10-year lease. The units were 22kw fast chargers.

### **Running out of Time – Baton Relay**

Day 8 of the Running out of Time – Baton Relay was held in Bracknell Forest; Gareth Jones ran the inward leg from Wokingham to Bracknell and Damian James ran the outward leg from Bracknell to Windsor. The relay was from Glasgow and would make its way to Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt. The baton held a message from young people in Glasgow to the young people in Sharm el-Sheikh and the decision makers at COP.

#### **17. Date of Next Meeting**

The Democratic Services Officer would consult with the Chair to find a suitable date for the next meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Panel.

**CHAIRMAN**