

Leadership Task Group on Climate Change

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 19th January, 2021

The reformed Task Group on Climate Change has now met three times since the 22nd September 2020. The last meeting was on January 5th.

Our core focus in the initial meetings had been to consider two key areas of work. Firstly, establishing and confirming a core list of areas where we as a Council have full control over what we do and manage. The second, consider how we might influence others whether that be our own residents in Spelthorne or beyond.

Having declared a climate emergency – with the full intention of cutting our carbon emissions to zero at the earliest practicable date, preparatory work has been undertaken with outside consultants APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). They have completed their initial work on identifying our current carbon footprint and are now completing work on a carbon trajectory for us to begin the task of overall reduction.

It is hoped the work will be completed by the next time we meet on January 26th.

2) Establishment of smaller sub-groups of the Task Group to focus on specific issues.

Initial work has begun on four of the six previously identified sub-groups of the main task group.

a) Subgroup on Transport

Transport has already been identified by the initial work of APSE as an area where SBC can do better to reduce our carbon emissions. The Chair of the Task Group, Cllr. Noble and Cllr. Bateson have identified the need for an initial review of lower cost machinery and equipment being used by Streetscene based at the Depot. Much of this equipment, leaf blowers, chainsaws, grass trimmers etc. are most often petrol or diesel driven and use two-stroke engines – some of the most polluting engines available.

To switch larger and more costly vehicles such as Refuse Vehicles will need more time and considerable wider planning. Renewal of large fleet vehicles is carried out over a longer period and involves greater capital costs. Working with partners such as Surrey County Council or other Boroughs could ensure a greater cost-efficiency when procuring expensive vehicles and equipment in the longer term.

Although the Council has 'dipped its toes' in the water by purchasing a small number of EV vehicles, this sub Task Group will begin to look at all forms of transport, including not only vehicles owned and run by the council but also how we can influence a behavioural change with private car owners through to developing a wider strategy.

Further research is also required into alternatives to electrically powered vehicle such as hydrogen.

b) Subgroup on Policies review

Due to pressures internally with core senior Officers tackling both the COVID-19 crisis and the changes and possible consequences of Brexit, progress on Policy Reviews has yet to take place. However, all departments and core Council business areas have been made aware the declared climate emergency decision must now take front of stage when all decisions are being made. There may well need to be a consideration for staff training in this area to instill the necessity for this to take place.

c) Subgroup on Council Assets Review

Initial discussions are about to begin on thorough review of all Council assets including property, vehicles, equipment, procurement, work practices and other areas. This will be a huge undertaking and consideration needs to be given to resourcing the review both financially and physically.

d) Subgroup on Financial Investments Review

This sub-group, which includes Cllr. Brar, Cllr. Doerfel and Cllr. Noble has yet to meet as we have had to allow the Officers involved time to complete the annual Council Budget Setting process. SBC's main financial advisors Arlingclose have been briefed to consider a switch to greener investments for the Council and, when practical the sub group will meet with relevant Officers. This again will need to be a longer-term strategy given the nature of investments currently and the desire to move to a more 'greener' investment agenda.

c) Partnering with other organisations

At the last meeting of the Task Group on Tuesday 5th January, we received a presentation from Carolyn McKenzie, Director of Environment at Surrey, from the perspective of both Surrey and the Surrey Environment Partnership. Carolyn gave a very detailed brief on the work of the Partnership for the County and several other Borough and District Councils. There is a vast amount of work

going on and a whole range of bodies and organisations contributing to the work of the partnership. It became clear there are a host of opportunities for Spelthorne to both join in with and learn from, rather than reinvent the wheel..

Carolyn also informed the group about the opportunities to access funding from the government and other bodies to help pay for the immense amount of work that is needed. The Task Group will review what Carolyn presented at their next meeting and begin to build a dialogue to help move us forward.

The smaller action group on this area will include Cllr. Fidler, Cllr. Vinson, Cllr. Siva and Cllr Noble and Sandy Muirhead.

d) Communications Programme

The next issue of the Bulletin will be 'Green' focused.

It will include a broad spectrum of information, advice, and practical tips on how nearly our 100,000 residents can take steps to decrease their individual carbon footprint.

It will also promote several possible new initiatives within the Borough.

In addition to the Bulletin issue, the communications team will be looking at reviewing the Council website and social media offering about the climate emergency announcement and core initiatives being undertaken by SBC.

This sub-group needs also to look at a communication strategy with Sandy Muirhead and Jen Medcraff aimed at Councillors and internal staff to raise the level of awareness and need for change within the council regarding the seriousness of our climate emergency announcement.

e) Personal audit of Councillors

So far only two of the group have submitted their own 'personal audit' of their own carbon footprint but the Chair asked for others to take a look at their own lifestyles and try and work out as best possible their own contribution to the worlds greenhouse gases.

Diary date and time of next meeting:

Date of next meeting 26th January 2021

Time: 18.00

Place: Via Skype/Teams