

**Minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
10 May 2022**

Present:

Councillor I.J. Beardsmore (Chairman)
Councillor O. Rybinski (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	T. Fidler	S.C. Mooney
M. Beecher	N.J. Gething	J.R. Sexton
J.T.F. Doran	K.M. Grant	R.D. Dunn

Substitutions: None

Apologies: Councillors N. Islam

In Attendance: Councillors L. E. Nichols, C. Bateson and R.J. Noble

36/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

37/22 Questions from members of the Public

There were 3 questions from a member of the public. These were raised during the relevant agenda items.

38/22 Presentation - Climate Change

The Committee received a presentation on climate change, illustrating both the global and local impact. The aim of the presentation was to promote awareness of climate change and action that can be taken to combat it. Examples of work undertaken by the Council so far was provided and suggestions of small steps every person could take to help.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Climate Change Officer advised that she would circulate the size of the Council's carbon footprint to members. It was difficult to work that out for the borough as a whole however because there were so many variables and insufficient information available. The team were engaging with the Economic Development team about how they could work with them to encourage businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and would report back on this.

Issues raised by the Committee included air quality concerns and the potential impact of an extension of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone, the importance of recording what is spent on sustainability, considering and strengthening the sustainability aspect in all aspects of the Council's work, encouraging green walls and roofs and similar initiatives by developers, asking local businesses to submit information on a regular basis and consider offering an incentive to those who reduce their carbon footprint, and promoting a plant based diet.

The health impact of the increase in the provision of high rise was raised and the possibility of adding a carbon calculation statement to planning development submissions. The Planning Development Manager advised that there was no legislation at present requiring this but undertook to look into it further. It would be possible to ask developers to voluntarily supply information, particularly for larger schemes. One member suggested that the Council set a precedent and provide this information for all of their own proposed developments and that the Committee should make a recommendation or motion to Council accordingly. It was suggested this was raised later in the agenda under 'Urgent Business'.

Cllr Noble, Joint Chair of the Climate Change Working Group, stressed the need for more members to join the working group and become involved as there was a vast amount of work to be done. He also thanked Sandy Muirhead, Group Head for Commissioning and Transformation for her work.

A list of actions taken to date was circulated to those present and also a plea for all to pick up the baton and demonstrate to residents our commitment to tackling climate change.

39/22 GIF Bid - Communications materials for residents and businesses

The Committee considered a request from the Climate Change Officer, Spelthorne Borough Council, for funding from the Green Initiatives Fund (GIF) to fund a communication package designed for local authorities to help deliver communications on climate change and inspire local residents to lead healthier, more environmentally friendly lifestyles and take actions to mitigate climate change.

Two questions were received from a member of the public in connection with this agenda item:

Question 1 from Kath Sanders:

"What are the potential ongoing annual costs beyond 2022 and how will they be funded? Can some actual targets/KPIs be added (e.g. workshops completed, no. of residents reached via different channels, measurable impact)?"

Response from the Chair:

“The cost of the package is £9995 for a year’s worth of content, however once we have the content we can continue to use and adapt this for future use. If we do want to engage again in the future with another package this could potentially be funded through the Green Initiatives Fund.

The communications team measure the levels of engagement across Spelthorne’s different channels and will be able to monitor engagement with the climate posts. No workshops or specific extra resource have been agreed upon yet with Hubbub, but once these have been KPIs can be created.”

Question 2 from Kath Sanders:

“What success has Hubbub enjoyed elsewhere and have any alternative packages been considered?”

Response from the Chair:

“Hubbub are currently working with nine local authorities including Lewisham, Ealing, Kent, Buckinghamshire, and Harrow.

Ealing Council has seen a significant increase in engagement across their social media channels. They described the kit as being 'content rich, and has an editorial tone to inspire residents to take action'. Lewisham are using their kit as part of their Climate Conversations campaign (<https://lewisham.gov.uk/ClimateConversation>) and Harrow are using their Climate Comms Kit to kick off their first ever climate communications campaign, which will launch later this month.

No other alternative packages have been found after several searches.”

Concern was expressed that the Council were looking at an individual rather than a collective approach with Surrey County Council. However, it was understood that the Surrey Comms Working Group had not decided on any specific outcomes and it was considered important to engage with residents at the earliest opportunity.

Funding was requested for 2022 only and would then be reviewed as to whether continued support was required. Members requested feedback and monitoring statistics as part of the future ‘items to note’ report packs.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

To refuse the funding application.

Resolved:

To approve funding of £9,995 for 2022 to provide funding for a communications package from Hubbub.

Reason for decision:

- To demonstrate a commitment to tackling climate change.
- To raise awareness of climate change issues with residents and provide tips on how they can reduce their environmental impact in everyday life.

40/22 GIF Bid - Sustainability Advice for the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents.

The Committee considered a request for GIF funding to seek guidance and advice from The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) to assist in the development of supplementary planning guidance documents to support the Local Plan in encouraging more sustainable design.

Due to time constraints, the application had not been considered by the Climate Change Working Group, however the joint Chairs of that Group had been consulted and supported the proposal.

The Committee was advised that these supplementary planning documents hook onto policies and provide additional detail encourage more sustainable design and developments. APSE had done a lot of work in this area, were well engaged with local authorities and promoted best practice.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

To refuse funding

Resolved:

To approve funding of £5,200 to obtain advice from APSE to support the creation of robust supplementary planning documents for the Local Plan.

Reason for decision:

The Local Plan in development will run until 2037, and the UK government has announced that by 2035 UK carbon emissions will need to be reduced by 78% compared to 1990s levels, therefore the Local Plan and SPDs will need to have strong climate change policies in place to reduce the carbon emissions of development and provide sustainable future homes.

41/22 Greener Futures Delivery Plan

The Committee considered a report seeking the Council's support for the Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025 published by Surrey County Council. The publication set out the next step in meeting County-wide and organisational net-zero targets and how the involvement of communities and businesses are essential to this.

The Plan set out four priority focus areas and sought the support of other local authorities within Surrey.

Cllr Noble, as Joint Chair of the Climate Change Working Group, advised that the group had looked at this some months ago and whilst considering it laudable, was concerned that many of the aims were items that the Council had little or no control over. Whilst the group supported the plan they did not wish to endorse it.

Concern was expressed that there may be political issues at play and that it was important to be careful but also to work collaboratively. Committee members who were also County Councillors offered to help with clarification on any points of concern that have not been resolved.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- The Council continues to pursue its own agenda and strategy but supports the delivery plan in a wider strategic context including funding but is not put at risk in terms of any inability to deliver on the Delivery Plan's ambitious proposed actions.
- Not to support the Delivery Plan which could minimise influence and opportunities

Resolved:

1. To support the Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-25 and delegate authority to the Group Head for Commissioning and Transformation, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, to notify Surrey County Council of this.
2. To commit to continue to work with other organisations including Surrey-wide local authorities to address climate change.

Reason for decision:

This will provide Spelthorne with opportunities to maximise funding and utilise shared knowledge to move us forward on addressing climate change at a faster pace than working alone.

42/22 Staines Conservation Area Appraisal

The Committee considered a report seeking their consent to agree the draft updated Staines Conservation area appraisal for public consultation. This was the first of eight conservation areas in the borough that would be reviewed.

The review had been undertaken by consultants and included recommendations on boundary changes. The review was part of a wider aim by the Council to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation area and to enable sustainable decisions to be taken about its future management.

Assurance was sought that taking out part of Staines bridge that was within Runnymede Borough Council area would not present any issues should work be necessary in the future. The Principal Planning Officer advised that this would be Surrey County Council's responsibility so would not present a problem.

Concern was expressed at the length of time since the last appraisal was undertaken and members were advised that the appraisals would be added to the strategic forward plan going forward.

The purpose of the appraisal was to document what was important about the conservation area and focus on the elements that were important to retain. It would not prevent development but encourage better, more traditional styling of developments that were relevant to the area.

A request was made that Moor Lane be added to the list of areas for appraisal. Officers advised that there were seven other areas to be considered and, after that, any other additional areas would be considered. The Committee requested an update on the appraisal list and a timeline for completion?

Options considered and rejected:

- To not agree the revised draft appraisal for consultation
- To agree the revised draft appraisal for consultation but with further amendments

Resolved to:

1. Agree the draft updated Staines Conservation Area Appraisal for consultation
2. Agree to go out to 6 weeks public consultation on the proposed amendments to the Conservation Area
3. Delegate authority to the Group Head Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, to approve the final document, taking account of comments, as required, which arise from the consultation.

Reason for decision:

Under planning policy, local planning authorities are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. The appraisal of Staines Conservation is the first of eight which will be completed as part of updating the conservation areas across the borough. The appraisal defines three distinct character areas and includes recommendations on boundary changes to remove areas where designation is no longer justified and also proposals to extend the boundary in some locations.

43/22 Indicative Air Quality Modelling for the Air Quality Action Plan

The following question had been received by Kath Sanders, a member of the public, in relation to this agenda item.

Question:

“Please could officers confirm if, in Section 4 ("Options Analysis and Proposal"), the scenarios for the informative modelling will (or can) include the proposed increase in population and traffic flows as a result of Local Plan proposals?”

The Chair advised that, as suggested by Kath Sanders, the response to the question would be included in the officer's presentation of the item.

The Principal Pollution Officer, presented her report, outlining the scenarios that would be undertaken to inform air quality dispersion modelling through consultation with Surrey County Council transport planners and a specialist technical consultant. The outcomes of the modelling exercise will inform policy and measures to improve local air quality. A briefing session would be arranged with the Environment and Sustainability Committee to discuss the findings and seek their views for actions to reduce pollution.

The Committee noted that the Mayor of London's consultation on extending the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) could impact on the borough and that the Council will submit their concerns when responding to the consultation process which is expected later this year. The Chair advised he also proposed to write to Transport for London regarding concerns over the impacts of the expansion.

In response to the question from Kath Sanders, the Principal Pollution Officer advised that the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was for a period of up to 5 years whereas the Local Plan was for a period of 15 years to 2037, so the site allocations identified in the Local Plan would be unlikely to be built within the time period covered by the AQAP and therefore not included in the modelling exercises. However, the Local Plan would include a human health assessment that would consider local air quality and would be subject to the Local Plan approval and examination process.

Questions were raised regarding access to other monitoring equipment in the borough and whether information was made available to the Council from those monitors. Areas of particular concern were the areas close to the Eco Park in Charlton Lane, Shepperton and also the Crooked Billet by-pass. In response, the Principal Pollution Officer advised that only limited data was available to her for the Eco Park area as the facility was regulated by the Environment Agency, but the information available was encouraging. With regard to the Crooked Billet area, that fell under the jurisdiction of National Highways and was not available to her, but any access to data via County Councillors would be welcomed. One of the challenges faced when looking at the data was taking into account the effect of the pandemic when traffic volumes had significantly decreased.

A member asked if the health assessment would follow national rather than WHO guidelines. The Pollution Control Officer advised that the plan was bound by DEFRA guidance levels and the Air Quality Standards set out in legislation rather than World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance levels. DEFRA are reviewing national targets for particulate matter, in accordance with a current consultation exercise. The expectation was that a new national target for particulate matter would be set according to the levels given in the previous set of air quality guidelines published by WHO, prior to the current guidelines that were published by WHO in 2021. The updated particulate matter target is required by the Environment Act 2021.

Postscript: If members or constituents wish to respond to the DEFRA consultation on particulate matter air quality targets, the consultation can be

accessed here: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/>

It was confirmed that budget had been allocated for the initial AQAP modelling exercise. Funds had been set aside for the consultation process, how far this might progress in this calendar year depended on the modelling and may depend on the results and actions proposed.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

44/22 Urgent business

As a result of the discussions during the presentation on climate change, it was suggested that any future developments of land owned by the Council or KGE Ltd should include a carbon calculation at application submission stage with a view to an appropriate recommendation being made to Council. It was also suggested that the information was requested from other developers.

The Committee agreed to add an item to their forward plan regarding

- (i) Submission of a carbon calculation statement for any future developments owned by the Council or KGE
- (ii) A request for a carbon calculation statement for developments submitted by other parties