

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

25 JANUARY 2024

PRESENT:

Members of the Working Group: Councillors Picker (Chair), Ms Livesey, Rabin, Roodhouse and Ms Watson-Merret

Officers: Dan Green (Deputy Chief Executive) and Claire Preston (Chief Officer – Operations and Traded Services)

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 were approved.

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Edwards and Slinger.

24. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The working group received a presentation from the Chief Officer for Operations and Traded Services providing updates relating to the Grounds Maintenance Fleet, perennial/annual bedding, no dig gardening, hedgerow management, leaf mould utilisation, grassland management, pollinator positive grassland and urban meadows.

It was agreed that information should be shared with councillors and increased communication would support a greater buy in from residents to the wildflower planting and urban meadows scheme.

Wider communication should link to organisations such as garden organic. Clarity around the grassland management practices was important and also ensuring these sites were kept in an acceptable state. One example was the introduction of herbs and other species which were slower growing.

AGREED THAT –

- (1) articles would be produced for inclusion on the Rugby Net Zero website in conjunction with the Communications Team; and
- (2) the Grounds Maintenance Team should ensure that some monitoring of the impact of the urban meadows scheme is carried out and utilised in future communications.

25. MOTION FROM COUNCIL – AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS

The working group considered the recent Notice of Motion to Council on the topic of Air Source Heat Pumps and determined it was predominantly a licensing issue, rather than a planning matter.

A technical note was requested to be provided by the Regulation and Safety Service to explain the reasoning behind the rules. It was recognised that the policy was universally negatively received by all political groups at Council. The working group was aware of the view that this work ought to be aimed towards ensuring a more consistent approach.

AGREED THAT –

- (1) a briefing paper be prepared in advance of the next meeting; and
- (2) the Deputy Chief Executive would brief the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment in how the matter can be progressed from a policy change perspective.

26. CLIMATE RISK AND ADAPTION PROJECT

The working group received an overview of the project being delivered by Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) and the associated timeline. The next step was to carry out some work on stakeholder engagement. SWM had provided an initial list.

It was noted that the forthcoming elections and pre-election period may impact on the timeline.

AGREED THAT –

- (1) the Deputy Chief Executive would seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on the timeline and circulate this to members of the working group;
- (2) SWM would be invited the next meeting; and
- (3) copies of the draft stakeholder list would be circulated.

27. PROPOSED VISIT TO CEMEX

The Portfolio Holder for Growth Investment provided a verbal briefing on an invitation from Cemex to visit their site and understand their approach to reaching net zero. This would provide an opportunity to hear of other initiatives relating to climate change.

AGREED THAT – potential dates would be circulated to the working group.

28. STANDING ITEMS

Impact Assessments

The working group received a draft revised Climate Change Impact Assessment. This considered scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions to align with the Climate Change Strategy.

AGREED THAT – the draft would be circulated for comment and to understand how this can be linked to a KPI or the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.

Communications

It was agreed there should be a focus on the communications relating to grounds maintenance and the forthcoming growing season.

The working group commented there had been no updates to the Rugby Net Zero website.

AGREED THAT – an explanation of the technical reason why net zero analytics are not available would be sought.

Next Meeting

Items for the next meeting included:

- Attendance by the Chief Officer for Finance and Performance.
- Update from SWM - Alan Carr will attend.
- Briefing paper from Regulation and Safety on Air Source Heat Pumps.
- Update on the Climate Event.

Any other business

The topic of plastic tree shelters and biodegradable alternatives was raised.

AGREED THAT – an update would be requested from the Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing

A question was raised regarding future housing schemes if they fall within the Greenbelt and what schemes were in place in relation to providing aquatic and pond life to help reduce the carbon footprint.

It was noted that SWM may be able to advise further on this as part of the adaption plan.

AGREED THAT – the points raised would be explored.

CHAIR