

Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group

Held at:	Remote Meeting
Date	Tuesday, 22 June 2021
Present	Councillors Stuart Peall, Lesley Whybrow (Chair) and David Wimble
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Ian Meyers*
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Andrew Rush (Regulatory Services & Corporate Contracts Lead Specialist), Hazel Sargent (Low Carbon and Sustainability Specialist), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillor David Monk and pupils and their teacher from Seabrook C of E Primary School

* Although Councillor Meyers apologies were noted, he did attend for part of the meeting.

8. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

9. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2021 were agreed and the Chair's electronic signature will be added showing approval.

(Councillor Ian Meyers joined the meeting)

10. **Seabrook Church of England Primary School**

Pupils and their teacher from Seabrook Primary School joined the meeting and discussed various environmental issues with members. The Chair, Councillor

Whybrow welcomed the pupils and teacher and introduced members and officers. Each pupil gave a short speech. Members responses were led by Councillor Peall in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste and Building Control.

Topics included:

- Recycling in our area (reminding people of what and how to recycle) – ideas included installing more bins and ensuring clear signage. Councillor Peall advised there are 850 bins across the district with a view to increasing this, although recycling is fully encouraged, sometimes recyclable items do get mixed.
- Litter on beaches and more bins to be placed along the seafront – visitors discard cans, food wrappers, fish and chip boxes and disposable barbecues which can harm wildlife and attract seagulls. Councillor Peall said it is important that people either take their rubbish home or use the bins properly. 'Big belly' bins installed are extremely efficient and can hold 8 to 10 times more rubbish, however it was noted that some of these bins had been vandalised.
- Litter on beaches and organizing regular litter picks to tackle this – it is everyone's responsibility to pick up their litter. Important to encourage and educate people of all ages to keep their community free of litter.
- Communal litter picks in our local area (especially along the motorway and busier areas). Councillor Peall and the Leader, Councillor Monk advised that we are unable to litter pick on roads which are above 30mph limit due to safety reasons. However, litter picks can be organised in other areas and the Council would be happy to help with this.
- Litter on Hythe canal and more bins to be placed to tackle this and litter at parks and, again, more bins needed. A clear message to all is that if the bins are full, then rubbish should be taken home and not placed by the side of the bin.
- Schools waste and more bins to recycle their waste better – Seabrook Primary School recycles their paper and card, however the class felt this could be extended to plastic and food waste. It was pointed out that on average there were four pieces of plastic in each child's lunchbox. Councillor Peall suggested that the school contact their waste carrier to discuss these ideas. Another idea would be to install a compost bin, the Chair mentioned that a ward budget application could be made to help with costs.
- Water stands in our local area. Now that the warmer weather is here, the pupils felt this was important and also to discourage the use of single-use plastics. There are just two water fountains in the district, however contamination and vandalism can cause problems. The children were asked for any suggestions and sites for the Council to consider.
- Food waste and encouraging more to have home compost bins – also, encourage residents to use their food waste bins.
- Communal compost areas and communal gardens – compost can help with flower and vegetable growth which also encourages bees. Communal growing patches and allotments are good for physical and mental health, also offering social cohesion. Mr Andy Blaszkowicz

advised the children that he is responsible for parks and green spaces. He advised that the Council has its own composting process and this is then used for planting. 90% of waste is recycled from Grounds Maintenance.

Councillor Peall explained the district's Garden Waste process which is taken to Home Farm in Dover, where it is mulched and processed into compost for local farms

Councillor Monk would welcome any further ideas on communal gardens from the children.

- Wildlife and Bee gardens – the children had many ideas which included wilderness gardens to encourage birds, hedgehog houses and bee hives. Officers mentioned the Council's developing Green Infrastructure Strategy; Bee lines, a map to show best places to plant to encourage bees; the Coastal Park which is seeded with bee friendly plants; Hythe Military Canal; Radnor Park and Bee Road Projects, where 7km of road verges are only cut once a year.

The Chair, Councillor Whybrow asked the children what the Council could do to help further. The children suggested organising litter picks; posters encouraging visitors to take their rubbish home or ensure the bins are used correctly; spread the message to other schools; encourage walking and cycling.

Members thanked the children and their teacher of Seabrook Primary School for their attendance. All were impressed by the pupils depth of knowledge and understanding of these issues and would note and consider their ideas brought forward.

(Councillor David Wimble left the meeting and did not return)

11. **Update on Carbon Action Plan**

Members were updated on the Carbon Action Plan progress as detailed in the briefing note. Members' attention was drawn to the Climate Change Champions staff scheme; LASER Energy's progress on switching the Council's provider to a green tariff; Co Wheels, based in Canterbury, possible need for this in Folkestone; mandatory climate change training for all staff.

It was agreed, that despite the pandemic, good progress has been made with this plan.

12. **Briefing Note on UK100 Membership**

The briefing note provided information on UK100, a network of local authorities who have pledged to take action on climate change. UK100 carry out 2 to 3 campaigns per year with a yearly summit which the Leader of the Council would be obliged to attend. Also, it is the Leader of the Council who decides on a request to join the network.

The Chair, Councillor Whybrow, would be happy for this to happen, however it was felt that more discussion is needed on the merits of joining.

(Councillor Ian Meyers left the meeting and did not return)

13. **The England Tree's Action Plan Update**

The Government has published 'The England Trees Action Plan' following consultation on the 'England Tree Strategy' in 2020. The report summarised the consultation responses and the main proposals in the Action Plan for the Working Group's information.

Mr Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy and Performance Lead Specialist, advised that the Final Action Plan has now been published after receiving almost 21,000 responses to the main consultation.

Incorporated in the Action Plan are five pillars (originally four), the newly added fifth one being 'Knowledge and Science for Trees and Woodlands'.

Mr Tofts briefly summarised each pillar and did remark that although there are clear actions, timelines are not evident. He also commented that within the plan there are clear actions on access to woodlands, however the plan does not elaborate on how this will be delivered.

14. **Climate Change Impact Statement Proposals**

The report set out a proposal for including a climate change impact statement in Cabinet reports that would deliver one of the requirements of the Climate Emergency resolution.

It was noted that at present 50% of local authorities in Kent include a climate change impact statement within their Council and Cabinet reports. Members were asked for their views on this proposal.

- The statements need to set out the conclusions in a neutral way, remaining clear and impactful.
- Carefully considered, well thought out to avoid unintended consequences.
- Feasible with clear aims and ambitions.
- Maybe consider a 'pilot' exercise for a 12 month period with a note added to that effect. However, the Chair felt this could undermine the message.

The Director of Corporate Services suggested a trial for 6 months which could be noted on each report. It was intended that each department draft their own climate change impact statement with guidance from the strategy and policy team.

15. **Communications Plan Update**

Mrs Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services informed members that two years have passed since the Council's climate change emergency declaration. During July 2021 a proactive communications message is planned, dates and brief details given as follows:

W/C 28 June – Briefing note to all councillors and stakeholders detailing the work carried out so far in the District.

W/C 5 July – Grounds Maintenance week; tree planting; composting; bee signs and Beach Hut sedum plants.

W/C 12 July – EV charging points; parish/town council EV charging points; electric waste support vehicles and promote walking and cycling.

W/C 19 July – Place Week. Housing stock improvements; private sector housing energy efficiency grants; policy changes through Local Plan; Green Infrastructure Strategy; business grants towards carbon neutrality.

Members were welcome to comment with any ideas they may have. The plan must show connectivity, cohesion with suitable branding. Mrs Spendley said she would liaise with the Communications team to ensure smooth running.