

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Rob Yates (Chair); Councillors Bright, Davis, D Green, Huxley, Matterface and Pressland

In Attendance: Councillor Austin

1. UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITY

Hannah Thorpe, Head of Strategy and Transformation gave an update on Climate Change activity making the following key points:

- Dr Hannah Scott had left the Council.
- Lindsay Reynolds, Decarbonisation Surveyor, had recently joined the council.
- The timeline for the recruitment for the climate change officer had been delayed due to IT issues within the council. However, the position would be live with imminent effect.

2. DECARBONISATION OF ESTATE PLAN/FUNDING BIDS

Lindsay Reynolds, Decarbonisation Surveyor, gave a presentation on the decarbonisation of the estate plan / funding bids, making the following key points:

- The council had declared a climate emergency on the 11th July 2019, resulting in the production of a net zero strategy to aid the council to reach net zero by 2030.
- There were twelve priorities to the strategy. Three of these priorities related to the 2030 aim for emissions within the councils control, three other priorities related to the councils emissions that it had partial control over, and the remaining six priorities related to district wide emissions in Thanet.
- It was noted that priority one was addressing Thanet District Council's core carbon footprint. This meant addressing the emissions from the council's offices and buildings, which was inclusive of leisure centers.
- External grant funding came from three main sources: Department of Energy Security & Net Zero's (DESNZ) Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF), administered by Salix Finance; DESNZ's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Fund (PSDS), also administered by Salix Finance and Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).
- The Low Carbon Skills Fund was 100% grant funded, and enabled the development of individual heat decarbonisation plans, which would improve existing heat decarbonisation plans. The bids were noted as being awarded and assessed on a first come first served basis.
- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme fund is match funded and is for capital works to replace end of life gas boilers for a low carbon alternative. We intend to prepare and bid for all pots of funding for the core estate.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- How confident was the council that there were firms present to deliver the skillset to provide these services?
- There were concerns regarding the standards of work being completed by firms.
- How confident was the council that they would get the funding?

- Could the Cecil street building's solar panels be upgraded?

Lindsay Reynolds responded with the following key points:

- There were a number of firms and frameworks which were present to deliver the skill set needed.
- Frameworks would help in terms of getting the desired standard of works by firms.
- Upgrading solar panels on Cecil street building would be looked into as part of the LCSF and PSDS bids.

3. **DOMESTIC ENERGY UPDATE**

Lucy Rivers, Domestic Energy Officer, gave a presentation on the Domestic Energy update, making the following key points:

- Grants and services that the home energy team helped to provide included retrofitting grants and advice services.
- Advice services included: Thanet Home Energy Advice and referral service (only one in Kent), For Fuel poor and self funded "able to pay" clients of all tenures and Green Doctors in home advice for fuel poor households.
- Retrofitting services included: Local Authority Delivery Grants, Home Upgrade Grants, Energy Company Obligation Grants scheme, Green Homes Grants, Boiler replacement grants and Solar Together.
- Additionally, grants and services that specifically the Home Energy Team provided included: Warm and well packs, Household Support Fund, water bill discount, warm homes discount, Priority Services Register, social internet tariffs, crisis support (carpets curtains and electrical goods), landlord liaison referrals and housing maintenance referrals.
- Contents within the warm and well packs included: Heated blankets, thermal cups, air fryers, window insulation rolls, socks, laundry bag, letterbox draft excluder and thermometers.
- There had been over 70 community and stakeholder events undertaken by the Home Energy Team.
- Marketing activities included the use of social media outlets, press releases and mail outs to over 19,000 households.
- In 2024, it was expected that the Home Energy Team would be fully staffed, and would have retrofitting schemes open all year round.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- Thanks to the Home Energy Team were given by Councillors.
- How many people had been referred to the Green Doctor?
- Questioning was raised why Thanet District Council was the only council in Kent to have an energy advice service.
- How well was the mail out received?
- What was the average installation cost of solar panels?

Lucy Rivers responded with the following points:

- There were no stats regarding the amount of people being referred to the Green Doctors yet.
- The council shared as much resource and information as possible to other councils.
- The uptake for the mail out were considered as positive, and was considered an effective practice.
- The cost of solar panels had been reducing dramatically.

4. **UPDATE ON LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP) WORK WITH SUSTRANS**

Adrian Verrall, Strategic Planning Manager, and Morgan Sproates, Regulatory Services Manager, gave an update on local cycling and walking infrastructure plan with sustrans making the following key points:

- Sustrans were working with Thanet District Council in order to develop a cycling and walking infrastructure plan.
- Focus had been put on the rural areas, and had the aim to build further on works which had been undertaken in 2021.
- The council had been carrying out an engagement programme in order to understand who had been walking and cycling and the locations they wanted to go. The council was also looking into who was not walking or cycling and what the potential barriers to this were.
- Stakeholder engagement sessions had run throughout June and September 2023, and included both in-person events and online consultations.
- Kent County Council had allocated Thanet District Council £5,000 from the ATE Capability Fund Extension for additional cycling and walking audits.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- The state of the highway discouraged people from cycling.
- What was the percentage of young people that cycled?
- How would cycle routes be marketed to the wider public?

Adrian Verrall and Morgan Sproates responded:

- Councillors could lobby Kent County Council concerning the state of the highways, and potholes specifically.
- Specific percentages could not be given at this stage. However, perceptions studies had been carried out, main concerns to cycling were regarding safety on the highway.
- Engagement would be carried out over social media. It was noted that funding wasn't specifically targeted at marketing.

5. **E-BIKES AND UK HABITAT UPDATE**

Lisa Collingwood, Beach and Coast Manager gave an update on the E-bike and UK habitat, making the following key points:

- There was a new staff cycling policy, which entailed sustainable transport for coastal staff. This supported the climate change strategy and promoted green travel
- The council had five new e-bikes and equipment ready within the fleet.
- Training would be provided for the new e-bikes and equipment.
- Coastal biodiversity in 2024 was supported by the beach and coast team, Birdwise, Thanet Coast Project and Kent Wildlife Trust.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- There were lots of coastal promenades that bikes were not allowed to cycle on, would this include the e-bikes?
- When would the project go live?
- Would there be a specific uniform for staff on e-bikes?

Lisa Collingwood responded:

- On the promenades that e-bikes were not allowed on, staff would dismount.
- The project was due to go live early May 2024.
- Uniform for staff on e-bikes would include appropriate footwear and a high visibility jacket / vest.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED EVENTS

Simon Fielder, Tree Officer, noted that a report shall be going to cabinet on the project to create mini woodlands. The suggested sites where this would happen include: Tiviloi woods, Hartsdown park, St Peters recreational ground, Broadstairs memorial park, Northdown park. In total, there would be 4 hectares of planting.

7. GENERAL UPDATE FROM OFFICERS

Tony Marmo, Head of Coastal and Public Realm, noted that the council had been working on the installation of electric vehicle charging points at Dane Park depot and the replacement of three of the vehicle fleet with electric vehicles.

Morgan Sproates noted that the DEFRA bid for new air quality management had not been successful.

Meeting concluded : 12.06 pm