

NOTES ON A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)
1st December 2021 via Zoom

Attendees: Cllr John Turner (JT), (Chair), Cllr Ed Langridge (EL), Borough Cllr Harry Allen (HA), Alan Ford (AF), Ken Howes (KH) and Simon Norton (SN)

In attendance: Catherine Barrett (CB) Assistant Clerk

Apologies for absence received from: Cllr Ben Scarbrough (work commitments) and Lizzie Pannell (family commitments)

1) Greenhouse Gas Net Zero Plan Update

JT shared his calculations showing how much energy had been consumed in parish-council owned buildings during 2019. These calculations would be used as a baseline and the next steps were to produce comparative calculations for the years 2020 and 2021. JT said he didn't expect there to be a trend due to lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 when the buildings had not been fully used. An action point was set for CB to send JT the relevant information needed to make further calculations, so that the working group could begin to plan how to reduce emissions.

2) KCC Electric Vehicle Charger (EVC) trialling scheme

- Summary of survey and next steps by the Chairman

JT reported that the parish council's application to KCC for funding to trial up to two electric vehicle chargers on parish-council owned land – the Langton Green Recreation Ground car park had been proposed – had been successful in reaching the next stage. This application had been supported by a residents' survey, which had eighty-nine respondents. The majority were in favour of having electric vehicle chargers in the parish. KCC would now visit the proposed site to assess its suitability.

KH asked how this application would dovetail with electric vehicle charger initiatives at borough level. HA said that he was looking into suitable sites for on-road chargers and there was likely to be a public consultation. He offered to ask County Councillor James McInroy about further plans at County level.

SN said it was a good idea to use the KCC-funded trial to measure how much the chargers were used. This information would help determine where chargers should be installed in the future. He said that since there was much work to be done before 2030 when the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars would take effect, it was important to start now.

CB said that the installation contract sent by KCC had been considered at the Governance working group meeting on the previous evening. Cllr Barrington-Johnson would contact JT to look about looking into it further.

3) KALC climate emergency report

- Discuss findings and ways to incorporate into our environmental programme

JT had shared the National Association of Local Councils' guide to planning a climate emergency communications campaign. Members agreed that this was a helpful document and discussed how to build it into communications to parish residents.

It was agreed that the parish council website needed a webpage on the climate emergency, including a statement from the Chairman detailing the parish council's commitment to addressing it. An action point was set to raise this at the next Full Council meeting and JT would offer to work on the wording with Chairman Dave Pate.

It was agreed that a communications plan should focus on a different message each quarter. Each quarterly campaign should link with a national or global theme. For example, Q1, January-March should focus on energy-(money)-saving tips for the new year. Q2, April-June, should focus on biodiversity when the growing season was at its busiest, and would also coincide with the UN's biodiversity conference. Q3, July-September, and Q4, October-December, could be planned at the next working group meeting. Working group members with an interest in specific themes would contribute towards parish magazine articles, website and social media posts which would be distributed by the Assistant Clerk.

HA said that messaging should be positive and non-political, and everyone agreed that it should be simple, with a drip feed of practical tips that residents could follow to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour.

There was discussion about how to involve local schools. The Assistant Clerk said she could contact the headteachers to see if and how they would like to be involved. She suggested asking children to put themselves forward as environment reps and getting them involved in creating social media posts.

EL suggested that everyone think about an effective tag line that could be used as part of the campaign, eg. 'finding a local solution to a global crisis'.

An action point was set for EL to send a link to NALC's community carbon calculator, showing the parish's carbon footprint, to be shared with residents.

4) Environmental Household tips

- Discuss how to order by theme and share on social media

An action point was set for JT and EL to organise the tips into themes. These would be shared as part of Q1 communications.

5) Bio-diversity review

AF had made a list of trees in the pocket park at Roopers, Speldhurst and visited the Green at Old Groombridge. He noted that the Green had a covering of daisies, which would encourage pollinating insects. This indicated that the grass had not been treated with weed killer. An action point was set for AF to carry out surveys of all SPC-owned land during the growing season to get a clearer picture of the variety of plant and animal life. AF offered to give tours of the land he was surveying to residents.

JT suggested that the working group should look at any improvements that could be made once the surveys had been carried out.

It was agreed that using parish-council owned land as an example of what can be done to improve biodiversity would be an effective way of getting people to make changes in their own gardens. SN suggested asking residents how they would feel if grass verges were left to grow. It was agreed that this was another area where local children could be involved.

An action point was set for AF, KH and SN to work on a biodiversity communication plan. CB said they might find it helpful to listen to a NALC biodiversity webinar she had recently attended. This had been shared in the meeting documents.

6) Any other business

There was no other business.

7) Covid Update

Due to the number of local covid cases it was agreed to continue meeting by zoom for the foreseeable future.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.