

Notes of a meeting of the Climate Change Working Group

Held on 1 December 2021, virtually via Zoom

1. Wildflowers and grass cutting

It was noted that Woking Borough Council (WBC) had a clear and strong commitment to supporting local biodiversity and enabling local residents to access and enjoy natural green spaces, as set out in the [Natural Woking strategy](#).

One way of delivering on this biodiversity commitment is through changing land management practices in regard to grass cutting to allow suitable areas to grow wilder, promoting native wildflower growth, assisting invertebrates by providing food, shelter and a place to breed.

The Group received a report recapping on what the Council and our partners have already done in this respect, learning from this experience, and highlighting opportunities for developing future practise. Recommended future steps were agreed to continue to expand the number and extent of areas under WBC management which are managed in ways that support biodiversity, and sharing more information online on this topic and how people residents can get involved.

2. Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) update report

Attention was drawn to the international COP26 Climate Conference which took place between 31 October and 12 November 2021. The Working Group noted the key ambitions announced within governments' strategies and the possible main outcomes of the conference. To mark COP26 and help individuals understand how they can make a difference, Planet Woking had published some related communications:

- [An article explaining about the COP26 conference](#), what it seeks to achieve and how local action can make a difference.
- [26 for COP26, a list of 26 ideas to inspire individuals to cut carbon and boost biodiversity](#).

It was also noted that a WBC Councillor was interviewed by BBC Surrey as part of a launch of the BBC's "Pledge to Change" campaign that looks at how the public can make positive changes in their day to day lives.

It was noted that Woking was ranked the highest on a list of green local authorities in Surrey, and 89th nationally, in an article featured in the Surrey Advertiser.

Members may wish to sign up to [Surrey County Council's Climate Change update newsletters](#).

3. Greenhouse gas emissions

The group received the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report for 2020/21. It was noted that WBC's greenhouse gas emissions had decreased by 37% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 and by 45% on the baseline year (2018/219). Whilst energy consumption across all sites had seen a decrease, the largest reduction in both gas and energy consumption was reported to be the Town Centre and Woking Park sites. The significant decreases were attributed to national lockdowns during the pandemic. Whilst comparisons have been made with previous reports, caution should be exercised as the reductions were unlikely to be sustained.

4. ThamesWey update

ThamesWey is contributing to two new reach projects led by the University of Surrey, investing in two critical aspects to the net zero transition. One of the projects will consider the optimum solution for implementing net zero domestic heating whilst minimising fuel poverty and will use Woking as a case study. The second will investigate the perceived barriers to engaging with a large-scale energy efficiency retrofit programme. Both projects are expected to conclude by the end of April 2022.

According to latest Government statistics the Green Jump Surrey consortium continued to be the second highest achieving in England for the number of homes installed through the energy efficiency national scheme.

Government's announcement that "all electricity generation in the UK will be completely decarbonised by 2035". The Chairman enquired what effect, if any, this announcement would have on ThamesWey's plans for the town centre CHPs and Milton Keynes power station. The chairman requested a route map with milestones on how ThamesWey is planning to accomplish Woking's 2030 net zero carbon pledge within its own energy sites.

5. Other business

Woking Environment Action (WE Act) submitted comments and recommendations, for future consideration by the Working Group, to assist the Council and wider borough's journey towards net zero carbon.