

# Medway Council Meeting of Climate Change Member Advisory Group

Tuesday, 08 September 2020

1:00pm to 2:30pm

## Notes of the meeting

**Present:** Councillors: Doe (Chair), Gulvin, Stamp, Hackwell, Tranter, Thompson, Maple  
Oliver Branch (Medway Youth Council)

**In attendance:** Vicki Emrit, James Sutton, Ruth Du-Lieu, Lucy Kirk, Sarah Valdus, Michael Edwards, Georgina Edwards, Nicola Trainor, Catherine Smith, Sarah Byrne, Lynette Godwin, Stuart Steed, Matthew Pinder, Martin Hall

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and noted apologies from Cllr Curry, Cllr Filmer, Dave Harris and Richard Hicks

### 2. Notes and Actions from the last meeting

2.1 The group agreed that the summary of the previous meeting was an accurate reflection and agreed the minutes.

2.2 The Chair referred to the carbon offset fund, as mentioned on page two in the minutes from the previous meeting. **This is to be kept on the long list of actions** and captured within the emerging action plan.

2.3 The Chair referred to page three item 4.8 in the minutes from the previous meeting regarding the previous update from the Planning Team. Cllr Doe reaffirmed the necessity to actively look at opportunities from the development of the Local Plan. **Planning officers to report back to the group when draft policies are ready to be shared.**

2.4 The Chair mentioned the Net Zero Conference, item 5.1 in the previous minutes. The details for this event have been circulated to the group.

2.5 The Chair made reference to item 5.2 in the previous minutes, the Re:fit programme. It is currently ongoing and ward Councillors will be updated as interventions are planned.

2.6 The Chair referred to page four of the minutes from the previous meeting and the setting up of a Multi Theme Working Group. A meeting has been arranged for the 7<sup>th</sup> October to discuss trees; **the walking/cycling meetings are still to be arranged by Transport officers.**

2.7 The Chair referred to item 5.14 in the previous minutes regarding wildflower meadows. An update on this item to be discussed later on in the meeting.

2.8 The Chair referred to item 5.15 in the previous minutes on the Urban Tree Challenge fund. A decision on the bid is imminent.

2.9 The Chair referred to item 5.19 in the previous minutes. **Web content on reducing the use of single-use plastics to go live by the end of September.**

### 3. Declarations of Interests by Councillors and officers

3.1 With reference to item 6 (Environmental Actions Update) Cllr Maple informed the group that he is also a member of Chatham Maritime Trust.

### 4. Transport Update

4.1 Officers presented their progress on the Emergency Active Travel fund. The active travel initiative has been split into two phases. The first phase is currently being undertaken and most schemes have been implemented. Changes have been made to the cycle lanes on Dock Road, officers noted that this has lifted the visibility of cycle lanes.

4.2 With regard to the cycle lanes on Dock Road, Cllr Doe raised concerns that the lanes are on the main route for ambulances and has been informed that there is not enough room to move to the side to allow for the safe passage of emergency vehicles. **Action: this is to be addressed in the upcoming safety assessment by the Transport team and measures are to be put in place to rectify this if necessary.**

4.3 Officers cited a positive impact resulting from the temporary widening of footpaths for eleven miles of public right of way.

4.4 The second tranche bid is currently with the Department for Transport (DfT) and officers are awaiting the outcome.

4.5 The Chair advised that for the A2 Chatham Hill scheme, safety checks are to be made for cyclists to share bus lanes. Officers confirmed that they will be looking at a segregation of the lanes on this route.

4.6 Officers provided an overview and an update on the electric vehicle charging point survey that went out in mid-June. There have been 116 responses to date.

4.7 The Chair asked officers whether they knew how other councils were progressing on this as there may be lessons to learn from other councils' experiences. **Action: a roadmap and timescale for delivery of charging points to be established by the next Member Advisory Group meeting by the Transport team.**

4.8 Cllr Tranter asked about the Active Travel bid and the exact government requirements for it. Officers confirmed that there is no clear guidance from Department for Transport as to whether they might accept some schemes and not others. Officers expect to receive feedback on the outcome of the bid by the end of the month.

4.9 Cllr Tranter supports the development of an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points strategy, indicating what the goals and targets are for different areas within Medway. The Chair furthered this by requesting that the strategy includes a step by step agenda, a preliminary indication on where each charging point will be located and the terms and conditions of them. **Action: As per above item 4.7, officers to develop a road map for EV charging points by the next Member Advisory Group meeting.**

4.10 Cllr Stamp asked officers to actively look at opportunities to increase connectivity along the river. Cllr Stamp suggested that there were opportunities in the medium to long term to link these initiatives with the Natural England Coastal Path (see Item 6.1).

4.11 Cllr Stamp asked officers if there is a strategy in place for the promotion of electric bikes as this could encourage people to cycle around Medway more, given that it is hilly. Cllr Stamp queried how the Four Elms scheme will link in and not conflict with the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid. Officers agreed that it is important that all schemes fit into Medway Council's broader strategic picture. If the Active Travel Fund bids are successful, each one will have its own programme and process for engagement and consultation. Officers acknowledge the necessity to promote the use of electric bikes and confirmed that they are looking at promoting them as part of the two schemes located on hills. **Action: Martin Hall to raise Active Travel/Transport plans around Four Elms Hill at his next meeting with the HIF consultant (re public access).**

**Action: Transport and Parking officers to provide an update on infrastructure to support electric bikes as part of scheme development.**

4.12 Cllr Stamp noted the importance of learning from the efforts of other councils, for example Brighton and Hove, regarding EV charging points. Their roll out of chargers is proving to be cost neutral and producing an income for the Council. **Action: Transport and Parking team to refer to Brighton and Hove in the development of strategy.**

4.13 Cllr Stamp highlighted the importance of progressing the installation of EV Charging points quickly so as not to miss opportunities for funding.

4.14 Cllr Stamp would like to see a summary of the EV charge points locations requested via the survey. Officers noted that the survey was promoted via Digital Medway Matters to 6000 people, via the Medway Council Service Update page on Facebook and the Transport Facebook page. **Action: Transport and Parking team to provide the group with a summary of EV charge point location requests in response to survey.**

4.15 Cllr Gulvin asked officers to review how EV charging points can be incorporated into upcoming plans at the next parking strategy meeting. Cllr Doe noted that at the next Member Advisory Group meeting it would be useful to have specific location details where EV charging points could conveniently be located. **Action: Transport and Parking officers to review EV charge points at next Parking Strategy meeting.**

4.16 Cllr Hackwell raised concerns over Gillingham Business Park, originally it was granted 30 charging points within the planning permission. There are currently only four; three of which are defective. Cllr Hackwell asked Planning officers to identify the locations where the installation of EV charging points has already been agreed upon and devise a way to monitor and enforce these. Officers highlighted that there are not enough resources to check that all existing charging points are functioning. **Action: Planning team to provide Cllr Hackwell with an update on enforcement of EV charge points at Gillingham Business Park.**

4.17 Cllr Hackwell asked officers what the current policy is for the replacement of streetlight columns. Officers noted that they are currently reviewing the policy on the replacement of columns and LED lights and reported that they will be working closely with Smart Cities and Transport to consider whether the prospect of street light EV charging points will result in changes to current policy. **Action: Transport and Parking officers to provide Cllr Hackwell and Cllr Doe with an update on opportunities to integrate charging points in lighting columns as part of EV strategy.**

4.18 Officers provided an update on the council fleet conversion. A working group with officers from across the council has been established and a timeline for replacement is being developed. The next meeting is in mid-October.

4.19 Cllr Gulvin asked officers about the progress of the dedicated Children's Social Services vehicles. Officers mentioned that this this will not be included in the initial phase. **Action: Business Change team to provide Cllr Gulvin with an update on social worker EV pilot.**

4.20 Cllr Maple requested reassurance that conversations about electrification of small council fleet vehicles are taking place at the same time as conversations concerning changes in work practices and policies. Officers confirmed that an officer from HR is part of the working group and this will be addressed in the next item of the agenda.

4.21 Medway Youth Council asked for clarification over the type of licence an individual requires to be able to use an E Scooter. **Action: Transport and Parking team to clarify licence type for E Scooters and provide MYC with an update.**

## **5. Best Practice/Other Local Authorities**

5.1 Officers gave an overview of the recent LGA "Spotlight on Green Reset" webinar with an emphasis on the speed of change to working practices and behaviour change more generally as a result of Covid. Officers noted the intention to create a metrics dashboard and carbon literacy training for staff; for inclusion in the emerging action plan.

5.2 Officers gave an overview of the Committee on Climate Change - 2020 progress report to parliament and Ashden's Blueprint for Climate Action and Green Recovery. It was noted that the Blueprint is a good fit with the CCC progress report and a good basis to start discussions.

5.3 Officers provided an update on current Human Resource (HR) activity which is part of a wider review of working practices because of Covid and ties in with the results of the staff travel survey. Officers are currently working with Tusker, the provider of the council's private car lease scheme for staff, to include EV options and anticipate launching at the end of September/early October. As mentioned under Item 4.22, the Business Change team are looking at a pool of electric vehicles for staff business use during the day, encouraging staff to walk or cycle to work. A temporary change to business mileage policy for electric vehicles has been introduced but this will need to be made permanent. HR are looking at the mileage policy as a whole; currently individuals using higher emission emitting vehicles are rewarded with higher rates and the essential car user allowance encourages staff to drive a minimum number of miles per month. HR are carrying out benchmarking against best practice from other local authorities. Officers are also developing a home working policy to encourage staff to work at home, thereby reducing the number of commuter trips by private car and exploring staff cycle hire schemes and other public transport incentives.

## **6. General Update**

6.1 Officers presented an update on work around effective management of grasslands including a min-meadow programme, wildflower verges and the successful involvement of Friends groups. An overview of key environmental action on the Medway Estuary was also provided. Officers are currently undertaking a gap analysis to understand how accessible the river is. Twenty-one miles have no legal or public rights of way, and these are being mapped to develop an action plan for unlocking this route as and when it is possible. This also ties in with the England Coastal Path work.

6.2 Officers confirmed that they are exploring creating meadow areas within cemeteries, although discussions have raised some health and safety concerns. Officers pointed out that they are still in an ongoing dialogue with the cemeteries regarding the potential to create small meadow areas.

**Action: Environmental Protection officers to continue the dialogue around mini-meadow areas in cemeteries and make progress where possible.**

6.3 Cllr Doe asked officers to consider incorporating meadows into the churchyard that adjoins the Council building and the old Grange Road Cemetery. **Action: Environmental Protection officers to explore the suitability of the sites mentioned for mini-meadows.**

6.4 Cllr Doe asked officers to consider contacting churches in Medway and invite them to join the scheme. Officers were made aware of guidance available through Natural England on positive management of wildlife within churchyards. **Action: Greenspaces officers to raise awareness with internal teams of how the Natural England guidance on management of wildlife within churchyards can be used and promoted with local churches.**

6.5 Cllr Maple asked officers to consider whether Maidstone Road/Palmerstone Road cemetery might be a potential pilot site. **Action: Environmental Services officers to correspond with councillors on specific site requests for mini meadows within cemeteries, the level of work required and likely costs.**

6.6 Cllr Tranter asked officers to consider getting assistance from voluntary groups with meadow management. **Action: Greenspaces officers will continue to work with Medway Urban Greenspaces forum to promote volunteer opportunities and encourage local ownership of mini-meadows amongst Friends groups.**

6.7 Cllr Tranter noted that Medway has some great dark sky areas around the Medway Estuary which are an important asset. **Action: Greenspaces officers to factor Dark Sky areas into the Whoose Hoo project around the Hoo Peninsula.**

6.8 Officers gave a presentation on the impact of Covid on air quality.

6.9 Cllr Hackwell queried why anti-idling signs have not been erected in Rainham High Street and asked officers to install and state on the signs that Rainham is one of the four poor air quality areas in Medway. **Action: Environmental Protection team to look at this as part of their engagement work on idling and in line with Road Safety/Traffic Management considerations. Officers have started discussions with the University of Kent on the impact of signs on behavioural change.**

6.10 Cllr Maple asked officers to consider where else we can promote anti-idling for example social media, Facebook and Medway Matters and highlighted the importance of reviewing where other councils have done this well and received a good outcome. **Action: Environmental Protection and Communications officers to progress further communications work on anti-idling.**

6.11 Cllr Tranter asked officers to consider working with schools and educating pupils about air quality. Officers noted that they have been actively engaging with schools for a number of years now and can share this information with the group. **Action: Environmental Protection team to share Air Quality schools programme with the group.**

## **7. Communications and Engagement**

7.1 Communications officer presented information on work to date including developing communications around wildflower verges (and how this could be used to promote benefits of mini meadows), the Solar Together solar panel group buying scheme, an overview of an animated Air Quality video which has been created for schools and social media posts celebrating National Marine Week, National Meadows Day. An overview was also given on the focus for the remainder of the

year including a refreshed web page. MYC requested to see the final version of the air quality video created for schools. **Action: Environmental Protection team to share the air quality video with the group when completed.**

## **8. Funding opportunities**

8.1 Officers provided an update on funding received from BEIS for the Heat Mapping and Energy Master Planning Study and highlighted the next steps. The study is expected to take four months. **Action: Project officers to keep the group updated on Heat and Energy study.**

## **9. AOB**

9.1 None.

## **10. Date for next meeting**

10.1 To be circulated when confirmed