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## **CLIMATE CHANGE MEMBER ADVISORY GROUP**

**1 DECEMBER 2021**

### **UPDATE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Response  
Report from: Celia Glynn-Williams, Head of Communications and Marketing

#### **Summary**

Members are asked to note the update on the communications and engagement work during the past few months

#### **1. Background**

In July 2021 the Climate Change Member Advisory Group reviewed and commented on the proposed communications and engagement approach for our work on climate change. Over the past few months the Climate Response and Communications teams have been busy working on a number of events and activities focussed on climate response, culminating in our activities during COP26, as well as continuing to grow our digital activities and footprint.

#### **2. Events and activities**

**Medway Electric Vehicle Event -25 September** - We were delighted to schedule a specific event dedicated to climate change as part of the council's summer events schedule. The event was sponsored by The Climate Coalition as part of the national 'Great Big Green Week' focus campaign. This innovative event took place at Rochester Castle bringing together electric vehicles from 13 car manufacturers to enable local people to understand more about them and their benefits. It included good attendance from local electric vehicle dealerships, Connected Kerb who are running the installation of our vehicle charging points (including a celeb attendance by Martin Offiah, brand ambassador for Connected Kerb).

We needed to quickly create a design and spread the word as quickly as possible. The Communications Team implemented a range of communications activities including railing banners, posters, social media graphics, inclusion in our newsletters and promotion on the Rochester totem. Around 1,000 attended during the four hours of the event which received excellent feedback on social media. It is intended that this will be an annual event. The event has also inspired other Kent councils to plan

for similar events and the team was invited to give a presentation about the event at the recent Kent Climate Change Comms Network meeting.

**Wild About Capstone – 26 September** One of the new events in our summer events calendar, Wild About Capstone, is a celebration of being outdoors and enjoying the natural environment, promoting local rural crafts, arts, farming and local food and drink. Among the day's activities were arts and craft making, park ranger walks, local food and drink, kite displays and much more. We developed a range of onsite print material including railing banners, posters and flyers primarily targeting families. The event attracted comfortably over our target of 1,500 visitors throughout the day. The activities laid on by the various stalls, such as our Climate Response team, as well as the ranger-led children's activities were also very well attended. Medway Adult Education also attended to run workshops to make pin wheels from waste materials.

**Medway Adult Education- Autumn Term** - We have been promoting the range of climate friendly courses being run by our Adult Education team including the L2 Certificate in Climate Change and Environmental Awareness, Medway Remakery, Art and Crafts- St Augustines and Sewing and Dressmaking Skills. The team has met with the Eco Hub and Kent Wildlife Trust to explore future working together including an edible trail with "Old Chatham Area". We are supporting Fort Amherst engagement with families and groups on grow your own/allotments subject to finding a new tutor and have been running ongoing gardening projects with Dementia Friends Group at Eastgate house supporting those with dementia to create a community sensory garden. Other engagement activities included online workings for World Earth Day and Family Learning workshops during August.

**Member Briefing** – A briefing on the council's action plan and communications approach took place in October to keep members up to date with plans. A helpful workshop took place to explore what members could do with their communities and what support they need from council. 20 members attended the workshop and it was well received.

**COP26 Events** – A number of events took place during the two weeks of COP26 to raise awareness and engage local communities in ideas and getting involved.

**Community Climate Change Conversation** – this was our first larger scale event on climate change with the community, held at Rochester Corn Exchange on 9 November. We were pleased to welcome more than 60 attendees for the evening. Following an introduction from Cllrs Doe and Potter, we gave a short presentation on the Climate Change Action Plan. This was followed by two excellent workshops involving people holding discussions on their tables about the key areas where the community should be focussed and actions that can be taken together to tackle climate change. The engagement and energy levels in the room were high with many ideas coming forward and feedback from the event so far has been very positive.

We are collecting all the information written down on each table into a document to be shared with all who attended and publicly. We are now looking to set up a community network to drive forward this community action and create a direct link to the council for support and to feedback their ideas

**Climate Cafes – Wellbeing event** - A number of Climate Cafes took place to allow people to meet with like-minded others and express how climate and ecological breakdown makes them feel. This was the first time we have run such events so take up at this early stage was slow but people responded well to the idea of it and community groups have indicated that they would want to host their own. The posts about the event were the most interacted with of the COP26 events (barring the Climate Conversation). We hope to facilitate the community groups working together in future but perhaps not host the sessions ourselves as they may be better run by the community.

**Carbon Literacy Taster Session** - Speak Carbon hosted a free webinar to introduce the Medway community to carbon literacy. We attracted 18 attendees for the webinar. Two businesses seemed especially keen to book in the training after the session, but we are still waiting for confirmation as to whether they have organised training yet. We hope to do further work to promote this training to more businesses, potentially using those who have already undertaken it as a case study.

**Child Friendly City Hall –** November's Medway Child Friendly City Hall included a session dedicated to climate change as part of COP26, with around 100 attendees. This session was delivered by the Medway Youth Climate Change Movement and was an interactive quiz and poll. The audience was asked to raise their hand first if they thought a question was true, and in the poll, if they agreed with the statement. During the poll, the audience was asked if they were keen to learn or get involved with a subject, and then they were sign posted to how to get involved. There was a QR code for them to scan after the event if they wanted to find out more information. The quiz showed that knowledge about climate change was good, with on average around 60% getting questions right, though the questions were targeted to a younger audience. The answer was then explained, to help those who didn't know to learn about climate change.

After the event, the Climate Response Engagement Officer was approached by young people with questions such as "what causes climate change" and "why is government only responding now if it's been known about for so long". Fantastic questions from such young people. The climate response team was also requested to attend a school to do more teaching about the topic.

There were many other questions in the Hot Seat session, and we will look to take on some of the ideas and questions in future events.

### **3. Communications Campaign - #SmallChanges**

We have continued with our #SmallChanges campaign online over the autumn. Although tackling climate change can seem a daunting and impossible task, we want to highlight that making small changes really do make a difference. We have put out tips giving examples, e.g., one family can waste 35,000 litres of water each year

from not turning off the tap while cleaning their teeth and encouraging small changes that are achievable by the average person. We want to focus on things that don't cost extra money or even take more time, but things that can be done by most people. If everyone makes these #SmallChanges we can help tackle climate change together.

In October we challenged schools in **Walk to School Month** to try to walk the equivalent of the 416 miles from Medway to COP26 in Glasgow. Five schools took part this year in our scheme saving approximately 5tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

We also carried out campaigns to **encourage awareness about our air quality** through activities such as car sharing and choosing cycle routes with the best air quality as well as encouraging people to talk to us about how our air quality alerts could improve people's days.

#### **4. Digital Communications**

**Website Refresh** - We are currently working on a website refresh for climate change, due to be launched in mid-January. This will see the webpages become a hub of information for the whole Medway community. There will be dedicated pages for specific subjects, such as Energy and Water Advice and Sustainable Travel and Electric Vehicles as well as specific pages for groups, such as businesses, residents, community groups, etc. Our Action Plan Pages will also still be present, to ensure everyone can access progress on our action plan. We will be starting to keep more regular analytics to monitor site usage and usability.

**Social Media** - We have continued to issue regular updates on social media via our dedicated Climate Change account and via our corporate accounts too. The Climate Change Instagram account has now grown to 533 followers and we reached 1062% more accounts in September than the previous month. New features are starting to be used including Stories to extend our reach and this will continue in the next quarter. Our Facebook followers have grown to 2,089 and we saw a 205% increase in post engagement in September than in the previous month.

#### **5. Media**

We continue to mention climate change where relevant in all our press releases and 11 of our press releases have mentioned climate change since June as well as many of our regular Leader's messages.

#### **6. Newsletter**

A total of 799 people are subscribed to the Climate Change newsletter which is now sent out more frequently. Signups to the newsletter have been encouraged at events where the Climate Response team have had a presence in Q2. Since the start of Q2, there have been three newsletters sent out, and an VIP invite to the Climate Conversation event. The newsletter sent out in mid-October, ahead of COP26, was opened 601 times, with the most popular links being the Climate Change Conversation, then the Carbon Literacy Webinar, followed by the general

COP26 event page. The Climate Change Conversation invitation newsletter was opened by 406 of the recipients, and 80 people visited the booking page.

## **7. Other areas**

Our ***Medway Care Portal*** is regularly updated with information on climate change with the latest article covering Guidance for local authorities on Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions associated with social care. Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions as a result of council activity e.g. emissions from water consumption, outsourced fleet vehicles, staff business mileage etc. The new guidance features a number of successful case studies where Medway Council has influenced a reduction in carbon emissions for example by keeping business travel by care workers to a minimum. We will be looking to include additional communications to care providers in best practices to help reduce gas emissions soon.

## **8. Internal communications**

We now have a comprehensive section on our staff intranet on climate change and how staff can take action in their work and everyday lives to reduce carbon emissions. We regularly put up new articles and at the moment are focussing on how to reduce the use of plastic. We hosted a climate change staff drop in with the Medway Makers during COP26, to engage interested staff and hear their ideas. An internal communications plan is set to be discussed in the new year, with more drop-ins organised.

## **9. Next Steps**

Over the next few months these will be our priority activities:

- Follow up our Community Conversation event with the creation of a community action plan
- Start to establish governance planning for our community work
- Put live our new webpages and start to include more community information
- Explore further actions with our universities and joint initiatives.
- Work with Medway Voluntary Action to recruit volunteers.
- Further Climate Cafes with the community
- Explore large scale summit for next summer
- Plan how we engage further with the business community and start to create case studies
- Further engagement work with schools and young people.

## **10. Recommendation**

The Member Advisory Group is invited to note the report.

## Photos

EV Event at Rochester Castle



Wild About Capstone event



New EV charging point launch





## Mixed Media Art Class Rochester

Eco friendly materials/recycled materials frequently used upcoming collage project using scrap paper



Scrap paper owls as part of a family day for Adult Education





## Climate Change Community Conversation



Air Quality campaign



Staff intranet

