

Climate Emergency Taskforce
Meeting took place on Thursday 27 February 2020 from 6pm until 8pm

Present: Councillor Matt Bryan (Chairman) Councillors Gina Lewis, Jill Houlbrook, Simon Eardley and Christine Warner

Visiting Members: Councillor Elton Watson

Officers in attendance: Charlie Seward, Laurence Ainsworth, Georgina Patel and Emma Lawrence

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Climate Emergency Taskforce.

2. Apologies for absence

The following members and officers had submitted their apologies; Councillor Karen Shore, Councillor Gillian Edwards, Andrew Lewis, Will Pearson and Lyn Brown.

3. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The Chair advised that the minutes of the last meeting would be submitted to the April meeting.

Decided; that

the minutes of the last meeting of the Climate Taskforce held on 24 January 2020 be deferred to the next meeting.

5. Public Question Time/Open Session

There were two members of the public who wished to address the Climate Emergency Taskforce in public question/open session.

Steve Robinson – The printing business where Mr Robinson works sources approved supplies and is carbon balanced – accredited for 9 years – and measure the carbon that they generate.

The paper that the business uses, the printing process and the carbon that is produced therein has been measured and anything generated is then offset.

The council has approached the organisation to make sure that they are still operating in this way and the business has confirmed this is the case.

The Chair thanked Steve Robinson for attending the meeting.

Debbie Lee – talked as a member of the public who had a keen interest in Newton Primary School and would like to take this opportunity to raise the issues that the school is having with people keeping their engines running and asked the question of the Council as to whether drivers could be fined.

The Chair advised that this information would be passed over to regulatory service as Cheshire West and Chester Council now have powers to fine drivers for leaving their engines idling.

Debbie Lee went on to raise the issue of acknowledging small business who are going plastic free and whether this could be done in way of a business rate reduction, as well as highlighting the number of empty shop windows in Chester and whether Cheshire West could utilise the space and educate the public on recycling.

The Chair thanked Debbie Lee for attending the meeting and advised that Chester University were working on a project around SMEs that might be of interest to Debbie.

6. Energy (1)

The Climate Emergency Taskforce considered an update from Sean Traynor, Senior Manager. Sean provided a brief overview of the energy landscape and highlighted the following areas:

- Energy Strengths
- Nuclear
- Hydrogen
- Underground Gas Storage
- SMART Networks
- Knowledge

Energy is a crucially important sector and there are significant similarities across the region including employers of scale, manufacturers, a wide mix of energy users, existing renewable projects and centres of skills and excellence.

Progress and growth in this area depends on continued healthy collaboration across stakeholders in response to the climate emergency.

Research has also revealed that there are 400,000 job opportunities for a 'Net Zero Energy Workforce', with the largest percentage in the North West.

The Climate Emergency Taskforce discussed the research that had identified 4000,000 job opportunities and felt it was important to expand on this where possible.

The Chair thanked Sean Traynor for the presentation.

Decided; that

- (i) the Climate Emergency Taskforce noted the contents of the presentation.

7. Energy (2)

The Climate Emergency Taskforce considered a presentation by Myles Kitcher concerning the work of the Cheshire Energy Hub.

Myles provided a brief overview on the following work streams: -

- Ellesmere Port Project Ambition
- Ellesmere Port Energy – Phase 1
- Ellesmere Port Energy – Phase 2 (Project Objectives)
- Roles of the partners
- Innovation and Replicability

Georgina Patel, QWEST followed on from Myles presentation by updating the Climate Emergency Taskforce on the work which has been undertaken in schools who have utilised the Salix funding for energy efficiency projects. Salix recycling fund can be matched funded alongside the council and undertake work to develop a programme of works with the payback over 7 years that could be increased up to 10 years. Any savings returned to recycling fund could in turn fund other programmes.

QWEST had undertaken a study for electric vehicle infrastructure and would be delivering on some of the outcomes from that study and included six charging points being installed across the council assets.

Issues raised by Members:

Councillor Simon Eardley agreed the best use of energy and preserving jobs was clearly an important ambition however he was keen to ensure that we be sensitive to the needs of the community.

Members went on to discuss the options to explore around street lighting and the possibilities around revisiting the local plan part one. This was obviously not a quick process but would be beneficial to add more weight to planning committee and strategic planning.

The Chair thanked Myles Kitcher for his presentation.

Decided; that

- (i) further work to explore the public fund and a strategy to be developed around with the aim of providing it in a format to community groups to allow them to bring this agenda forward.

8. Waste (1)

The Climate Emergency Taskforce considered a presentation from Alison Butler concerning Cheshire West and Chester Council's Waste Strategy.

Alison provided the Taskforce with an overview on the changing waste picture and highlighted the reasons why Cheshire West and Chester required a new waste strategy as a result of significant changes to the waste industry and local government in recent years. It was important to note that Cheshire West and Chester Council has been recognised as a high performing authority for many years.

Alison reminded the taskforce of the three main contracts for collection of household waste and recycling, waste disposal/treatment and household waste recycling centre and information the Taskforce that from the 29 March 2020 Cheshire West Recycling (CWR) would take over the waste and recycling services for a period of 6 years.

The programme for the waste strategy was discussed and the Climate Emergency Taskforce was advised of the programme plan and timeline for reviewing the Waste Strategy.

Issues raised by Members:

Members raised the issues of how waste food was being stored in west Cheshire and whether best practices could be communicated to residents. There had been a number of reports of animals falling ill after licking the containers due to certain food waste turning toxic. Alison agreed to look into this, however Alison did advise that food waste was collected on a weekly basis.

The Chair asked the question as to whether food waste processing could be brought in house, at present all food waste was being sent to Wales. Alison advised that there was capacity for processing food waste in the UK and a discussion were in the early stages with a local business to explore the opportunities as there were some very innovative and fantastic opportunities locally.

Another issue raised was around school recycling and how this could be improved. Alison advised that schools had their own budgets and more recently there had been an increase in demand for people to want to recycle more and do more than they have before.

The final issue raised was around home composting and members were keen for information to be shared with residents and help raise awareness. Alison agreed that she would take this action back.

The Chair thanked Alison Butler for her presentation.

Decided; that

- (i) the Climate Emergency Taskforce noted the contents of the presentation; and
- (ii) agreed that Alison Butler would follow up on the issues raised around food waste storage and home composting.

9. Waste (2)

The Climate Emergency Taskforce considered a presentation from Mike Gardner, Local Authority Account Manager, WRAP summarising the work of WRAP and highlighting the impact of the draft Environment Bill on the Waste landscape.

The Climate Emergency Taskforce discussed at length the issues around construction waste and what rules or guidance could be put in place for Construction Firms to factor in recycling and re-purposing before undergoing a complete demolition.

Mike Gardner believed, over the years there has been a focus on this and in some areas it is felt that this has been addressed that the onus would have to sit with the commissioning authorities.

The Chair went on to advise the Climate Emergency Taskforce on BREAM who insist on a carbon cost attached to every single planning application which in turn is presented to decision makers and there is a section in there that details climate emergency.

Councillor Elton Watson asked as to whether WRAP was aware of any moves to update packaging standards on plastic. Mike advised that the government approach was not to regulate, as such it's about incentives those produce producing less plastic. The industry itself know that it has a problem and plastic was very much on the public radar. The UK Plastic Act was working with organisations to help address the issues.

The Chair thanked Mike Gardner for his presentation.

Decided; that

- (i) the Climate Emergency Taskforce noted the contents of the presentation.

10. Waste (3)

The Chair summarised the discussions and put forward the following recommendations;

- (i) to consult with the National Farmers' Association (NFA) in regards to farming plastic;
- (ii) explore commercial waste procurement process 3rd weekly bin collections
- (iii) consult the farming community on energy and invite representation to future meeting. Agriculture was on a future programme.
- (iv) include the NHS on a future agenda it was important to gain an understanding of what processes they have in place for dealing with waste.

11. Date of the next meeting

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of the Taskforce is 22 April 2020.