

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 8th AUGUST 2022 AT 6:30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT: - Councillors S. Ager, C. Jay, J. Palombi, J. Williams, R. Williams.

Also present: - Cllr C. Lager

Staff: H Andrews - Deputy Town Clerk
 S Smith - P. A to the council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Late apologies were received from Cllr Hicks who had work commitments.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTEE

It was **AGREED** to appoint John Palombi to the group as a co-optee.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

4. CLERKS REPORT

Members were informed that BDC have appointed a Climate Change Project Manager who has reached out to offer any assistance if needed.

It was noted that an upcycling competition has recently been launched on Social Media as part of the Street Entertainment Festival which has a conservation theme this year.

5. WITHAM INDUSTRIAL WATCH

Members were provided with an update from a recent meeting with Witham Industrial Watch. It was noted that the idea of solar panels within the industrial estate had been agreed but had to be taken to the board of directors. The next stage will be encouraging businesses to sign up.

Members were also informed that Carole Randall of Essex County Council's South Essex New Energy (SENE) Project is looking to conduct a geospatial scan of Witham to identify viable locations for solar panels, however they need a trustee to sign off on the project. Members considered options and suggested reaching out to any trusts they may have an active involvement in.

Concerns were raised regarding the viability, and usefulness of the project, in addition to how many people would be willing to be involved. Members suggested Eastlight may be interested in being involved, as at a recent Eastlight event attended by Members, climate change was heavily discussed.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE POP-UP STALL

Members agreed that the pop-up stall was a great success. However, Members were concerned that there was not enough to attract children and younger people, so it was suggested that sustainable craft activities should be investigated before the next pop-up, such as seeds or colouring.

7. RECOMMENDATION FROM ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Members discussed ideas from the previous minutes to be recommended to the Environment Committee in the form of reports, these included:

- Battery operated tools for open spaces use – To be reviewed in liaison with the Open Spaces Manager.
- Rewilding open spaces was discussed. It was **AGREED** that this would be the remit of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee and the River Walk Management Plan that in place.
- Information regarding climate change support and resources to be promoted on the website and on social media to increase climate awareness to include an active map to show recycling locations. Climate change content posted on social media to have something to differentiate it from normal posts. It was **AGREED** that Councillor Jay would prepare a report.
- A climate change checklist for WTC Events to reduce waste and to make them more environmentally friendly. It was **AGREED** that Councillor Ager would prepare a report.

Members also discussed further ideas to take forward -

- An event such as a “Witham Recycling Day” to give people a local, accessible location to recycle items. It was **AGREED** that Councillor J Williams would prepare a report.
- Circular walking routes in Witham to be provided on the Council website, including accessible versions. It was **AGREED** that J Palombi would prepare this information.
- Sedum roofs on bus stops.
- Move towards becoming a paperless Council.
- Research energy efficient light and heating for the Town Hall.
- Commenting on solar panels and heat/cooling pumps on all planning permission regarding new builds.
- Calculation of the Council’s carbon footprint.

8. DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Members spoke of the whether the Council should declare a climate emergency. Members discussed what the consequences of this would mean and that it may be more beneficial to initially produce an Environmental Policy highlighting how the Council considers environmental and climate issues in its activities. It was noted that declaring a climate emergency would involve creating a detailed action plan but this was an aim for the future.

It was noted that the Council already take climate into account in various activities but should increase this further in the office and with members.

It was **AGREED** to create an Environmental Policy in the short term, and look into recommending the declaration of a climate emergency to the Environment Committee in the future.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members suggested ideas to potentially discuss at a later meeting, which included:

- A sustainable period campaign that could be launched in schools to provide students who menstruate with menstrual cups and sustainable pads. It was **AGREED** that Councillor Jay would carry out research.
- The creation of a tree and hedge directory to ensure that mature trees and hedges are not removed during the creation of new building developments without the council realising.
- The co-option of a youth member from one of the local schools.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held before the next Environment Committee meeting, and that the office will email Members some available dates.

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 7:55pm.

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Councillor S. Ager
Chairman

SS 10.08.2022