

**CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING PARTY MEETING**  
**OF WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Wednesday 11 September 2019**  
**In the Gallery Room, Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor R Bolger (Chair)

Councillors:      J Aitman                                      D Enright (sub for R Smith until 4.20pm)  
                              A Prosser                                      R Smith (from 4.20pm)

Officers:            Office Manager – Adam Clapton  
                              Communications & Events – Polly Inness

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Cllr Bolger was proposed and seconded as Chair of the working party.

**RESOLVED:**                      that Cllr R Bolger be elected Chair for the ensuing municipal year.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Harvey.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Enright declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a regular user of The Windrush Bike Club for bike repairs.

**4. WORKING PARTY VISION & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Working Party Members were tasked with formulating a vision and terms of reference for the working party based on the motion passed by council on 24 June 2019.

A member noted that the Council's Committees were now considering environmental impact while discussing reports, in particular the Planning & Development Committee were active in referring to this while discussing planning applications.

A member commented that the vision could be to:

Pursue the objectives as follows: -

- 1. To join other Councils in declaring a Climate Emergency, and commit to the vision of carbon neutrality by 2028 at the latest*
- 2. To call on Westminster to provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on climate change easier*
- 3. To explore the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy*

*4. To work with partners anchored in the area to deliver carbon reductions and grow the local economy*

*5. To hold a public meeting made up of a representative range of our community members to establish the facts and make recommendations for our council*

*6. To establish a council working party to respond to the recommendations of the public meeting and establish a strategy to act on the vision of carbon neutrality by 2028 at the latest.*

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the vision and the Terms of reference for the Committee as detailed above be agreed and adopted.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF THE FACTS GATHERED AT THE PUBLIC MEETING ON 28 JULY 2019**

The Working Party received and considered a document containing items and issues discussed at the public meeting/workshop event. All agreed there was excitement amongst councillors and the public with feedback gathered on the following points.

Agriculture and Land

A member commented that the In-Bloom Sub Committee had decided that it wanted to educate people that what was best may not be “pretty” flowers but those which were best for the environment and encouraged biodiversity and sustainability.

An Officer advised that the Halls and Green Spaces Committee had just commissioned a report on how pesticides could be minimised on sports fields in the town and on looking for alternatives.

A member suggested a start would be to identify plots on Town Council owned land for tree planting and how grass cutting could be reduced and how to plant wildflowers and bee bombs. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that the Council already planted trees every year to replace those that needed to be removed but currently did not plant more trees, so that would be something new. The Mayor commented that he hoped to raise funds for additional trees this year. A member commented that carbon offsetting using trees was a slow process and one would need to plant an acre of mature trees to offset one flight to New York. He felt that it was better to concentrate on reducing carbon emissions in the immediate future.

A member commented that looking at the “Go Vegan” concept, the Council could not dictate to people but could try to spread the word more widely.

The Chair reported that she had been in touch with West Oxfordshire Extinction Rebellion and they had been lobbying schools to include education on the climate emergency within their teachings. She would report back with any updates.

Infrastructure

A member noted that there was already some work going on in terms of cycle routes but asked if the Working Party could invite someone from the County Council (Officer or Councillor) to come to the next meeting and talk about cycle networks in Witney.

A member commented that it was important for the Town Council to ensure that the cycle network linked to any new developments and ensure that they are linked to school. The Chair wanted cycle paths to have more visibility and that officers from the County Council may be able to assist with this. A member echoed an earlier sentiment that the Planning Committee was trying to influence more cycle routes, cycle racks etc.

The Working Party asked the Operations and Estates Officer to investigate solar panels.

#### Power

The Working Party asked to send a recommendation to the District's Working Party on greener housing for all building stock. Another member wondered if we could negotiate cheaper rates for insulation from a company for Witney residents. The Working Party asked if a community energy initiative expert could attend the next meeting and the Chair advised that she would get in touch with a suitable speaker, or perhaps even the Low Carbon Hub.

#### Transport

Once again, the Planning Committee members felt it was important to make its voice heard, especially in relation to the Garden Village and the proposed park and ride which would just move traffic on rather than reduce it.

A member wondered if the Town Council could get more children onto school buses but this was a county council issue. The Working Party discussed walking buses to schools and using the Community bus for school runs. The Office Manager explained that the community bus had been tried but the number of children using it was so small and was therefore not viable.

A member of the public asked how the Town Council envisaged cutting carbon use in terms of cars. The Chair replied that later in the agenda there was information about car free day.

The Working Party asked if the Traffic Advisory Committee would receive someone from the Town Council to speak about the desire to reduce car use.

#### Buildings

A member picked up the idea of creating bee friendly roofs on bus stops and asked if there was any possibility of retro fitting.

Once again cycle paths to new estates were discussed as important.

A member noted that the aspiration was to be carbon neutral by 2028 and therefore a carbon footprint for the Council's estate and vehicles was needed. The Council needed to work on influencing other such as farmers etc.

Regarding Twinning – a member had been asked by a member of the public if Witney could be twinned with somewhere that was not so good with tackling climate change such as a US Town. The member wondered if we could be greener in terms of how Witney linked up with the twin towns. This would need to go to the Twinning Committee which was separate to the Town Council.

The Chair was keen to work with Oxford City and West Oxfordshire District Council and to have any relevant minutes from committees, especially the District so no time was wasted by the two authorities working on the same issue.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. to ask a County Councillor/Officer to attend the next meeting to speak about cycle routes in Witney;
2. that the Chair approaches a speaker to attend the next meeting and talk about community energy initiatives;
3. that the Operations and Estates Officer investigates solar panel use;
4. that a member of the Working Party attends the next Traffic Advisory Committee to speak about the desire to reduce car use in Witney;
5. that the Operations and Estates Officer looks into the possibility of retrofitting bee friendly bus stop roofs;
6. that the Twinning Committee is asked on how visits to Twin town could be made more eco-friendly;
7. that the minutes from this working party/committee are forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council's climate working group and vice versa.

6. **REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM THE POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Chair wished to formally request a budget from the Town Council's Policy, Governance and Finance Committee so that the Working Party could do all of the things that it aspired to from the previous agenda item.

This would be the budget from next April, an Officer advised but the Chair was hoping for something sooner. The Officer Manager explained that this would be a separate request to the Committee and this would need to come out of the rolling capital.

**RECOMMENDED:** to ask the Policy, Governance and Resources Committee to consider an immediate budget for the Working Party and to consider an annual one for 2020/21. That Committee should consider what the Council could afford.

7. **UPDATE ON CAR FREE DAY – 22 SEPTEMBER 2019**

The Chair explained that Cllr Prosser and Officers had been working hard on this project. Cllr Prosser advised that this year was focused on generating awareness. The Windrush Bike Project would be leading three guided cycle tours on 22 September starting at 10am and Witney Parkrun would also be contributing. The Communications and Events Officer would run a small social media campaign for this year's event and Councillors were requested to offer help in serving refreshments at the Corn Exchange.

Next year things such as car sharing could be considered and a member asked if the churches could be contacted too as they were active on Sundays. Cllr Smith agreed to champion communicating with the churches.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the update be noted.

8. **FUTURE OF THE WORKING PARTY, DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair proposed that the Nature and Wildlife Working Party joined this Working Party and that it would become a Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee of Witney Town Council. There was an also a request to hold a bi annual public meeting and or/ a recycling awareness and crafting event

**RECOMMENDED:** that this is referred to Council on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019

9. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held at 4pm on 9 October 2019 and any experts could be invited to attend before the public in order for further discussion can be held .

---

The meeting closed at: 5.22pm

---

Chair