

Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee

Standalone Zoom Meeting 8 June 2023

To cover the agenda format of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee and discuss the Earth Protector Town actions

In Attendance: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, Paul Page, Andy Pearce, Deborah Ray and John Sillett

Agenda format

The climate driven agenda where the entire format is changed to the sub-headings was preferred, with items tabled under the sub-headings as much as possible rather than allowing for additional items at the end of the agenda. It was noted that any legacy items and escalation items where feedback was received from Cllr Mallinder would instead be escalated to Cllr Caroline Topping to allocate accordingly. This draft of the agenda would be brought to the next meeting of this Committee to formally adopt as their new agenda format. Another item was requested to have formal acceptance of the new escalation process.

Climate Emergency Action Plan

GM2 – Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee (CEEC) Operational and Effective – Cllr Brooks queried why this item states that the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee will make decisions differently. Cllr Ray felt that the consideration of nature is an important point that should be on agendas. It was agreed that the focus should be on coexistence.

GM9 – Project and Contractor Management and Works – Cllr Brooks suggested reviewing standing orders to assist officers in making decisions when overseeing and managing projects. Cllr Pearce noted that there was already an established policy to consider environmental matters when making decisions across all committees, which should enable officers to manage projects, and if there is not then the Town Clerk needed to report on what the obstacle to this is.

Concerns were raised that the Planning Committee often do not consider the environmental impact of applications, such as in the case of demolition. Suggestions were made to have a reminder in bold font be at the top of all agendas to remind the Committees of the climate and ecological emergency and that this needs to be considered in all decisions; possibly arranged a meeting between the Planning Committee and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee to explain the importance of the emergency; and for more members of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee join the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee are constrained by Planning Policy and Regulations, but a case can be made for policy review.

Public feedback on the Waveney Plan expressed that climate resilience was lacking and as The Waveney Plan is due for review next year, it was suggested to have an item on the next agenda for Planning to confirm when the statutory period of review is due for the Waveney Local Plan and engage with East Suffolk Council administration. It was agreed to also have an item on the agenda to consider the housing need and quote from the Waveney Local Plan. Cllr Ray noted that for the housing need the Committee can take into account the types of houses being built (whether they are energy efficient with high insulation) and the building is located. Discussions could be held with East Suffolk Council regarding London Road North where developments are unlikely to contain affordable housing and compensatory payment is provided to the District, and raise that if affordable housing is not provided then compensatory payment should be provided for elsewhere in Lowestoft. It was suggested to have an item on the next agenda for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee

to propose resuming quarterly liaison meetings with East Suffolk Council and recommend this to Full Council.

Tenanted properties would require more clarity as Lowestoft Town Council does not directly instruct its tenants.

It was suggested for the Lowestoft Town Council website to focus an entire week on why the Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and the implications for the town.

The request for a First Light stall should be initiated earlier next year as the event would present an opportunity to engage with the public, with a stall in Kensington Gardens and a ring-fenced budget. For this year's event it was suggested for officers to produce large posters explaining the climate and ecological emergency and what actions the Town Council are taking, with one poster located at the train station and another one at Kensington gardens. Permission would be required for the former location from the Community Rail Partnership, noting that Cllr Parker as a representative could discuss this with them. Cllr Ray offered to provide the office with posters she has made. It was requested officers confirm if it would be feasible to progress this request, with any subsequent costs to be provided to the Events and Communications Sub-Committee to approve the budget allocation. The posters could also be uploaded to the Town Council website.

PPE – Community Engagement – Cllr Brooks noted the successful Walking Bus initiative from Roman Hill and suggested that such initiatives could be supported by Lowestoft Town Council.

BLM2/BLM5 – Tree maintenance – Due to the time it takes for trees to have positive climate impact, tree maintenance is as important as tree protection. A budget had been set for 2023-2024 for tree audits and the creation of a tree inventory, with planned and unplanned works budgeted, thereby informing a more meaningful management policy rather than a reactive policy.

GM10 – Emergency Planning and Contamination/Pollution Control – Cllr Ray noted that the development of community resilience should be included in this section, such as emergency planning and long-term preparation controls and safeguards.

PPE2 – Influence and Promotion – It was agreed to sort pre-planning this year for the Big Green Weekend and treat it as an annual event, with a standing item in the events calendar after the Annual General Meeting to begin organising next year's event. Cllr Brooks suggested organising a green weekend near Christmas to address wrapping paper and single-use plastic. The Big Green Weekend could be a joint event with East Suffolk Council.

EM1 – Assessment of Carbon Footprint – Data Collection and Audit – It was queried whether the 2019 Greenhouse Gas report would be baselined for this data as the report is currently incomplete. The report could it be revisited and updated to provide the scope of emissions that the Town Council is in control of, including tenanted properties and third-party contractors. The Committee would need a comprehensive timetable for when the full report will be ready.

EM4 – Undesirable Consequences – Light pollution – Environmental implications had been considered with previous projects, such as flood lighting at Denes Oval, but a plan will be required for future Councillors, with considerations of how bats are affected by light pollution.

EM5 – Staffing Work Arrangements – Whilst Councillors must be present at scheduled meetings to vote, officers do not and could instead attend via zoom, which could be considered in the future.

Another point raised was that not all officers would need to be accommodated in future office space due to flexible working arrangements.

RWM4 – Awareness – Resource and Waste Management – There could be more signs for wildflower areas so residents understand why the area is not being maintained. It was suggested to reinstate youth clubs to address vandalism and have dialogue with East Suffolk Council and the Community Engagement Officer concerning the issues of vandalism. The Town Council want to encourage the use of parks by all age groups, considerations could be made for installing sports equipment, such as basketball rings, in various parks.

BLM3 & BLM9 – Significantly Improve Biodiversity & Increase Awareness of Biodiversity – It was agreed to include wildlife corridors in the plan as they are an important aspect and could be used cycle paths.

BLM8 – Reducing Damaging and Unnecessary use of Pesticides – Whilst there is a need to remove unwanted grass from pavements, the only situation where pesticide is required is Japanese knotweed. Clarification was requested on whether a vinegar and water mixture would be harmful or an alternative to pesticides. This could be discussed with East Suffolk Council as a united effort would be beneficial. It was suggested to amend the wording to ‘use of pesticides only being used in most extreme circumstances’ or ‘pesticides only to be used when there is no viable alternative’.