

## **Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group**

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| Held at:              | Remote Meeting  |
| Date                  | Thursday, 17 September 2020   |
| Present               | Councillors Gary Fuller, Connor McConville (In place of Jackie Meade), Ian Meyers, Lesley Whybrow (Chairman) and David Wimble   |
| Apologies for Absence | Councillor Jackie Meade   |
| Officers Present:     | Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Alastair Clifford (Operations Lead Specialist), Jana Getliffe (Horticultural Senior Specialist), Hazel Sargent (Low Carbon and Sustainability Specialist), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist) |
| Others Present:       | Steve Marks and Helen Cartledge (LASER Energy)  |

### **12. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **13. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020 were agreed. The Chairman, Councillor Lesley Whybrow, confirmed her electronic signature would be added to these showing approval.

Members sought clarity on publishing all presentations shown with the minutes which include information relating to the proposed carbon reduction plan. Members were advised that sensitive information contained within some presentations is for the working group's consideration only and not published. Ultimately, all future reports will be published for Cabinet and/or Council's consideration.

#### 14. **Grounds Maintenance Initiatives**

Mrs Jana Getliffe, Horticultural Senior Specialist, gave a presentation on Pesticide Motion and Environmental responsibility in grounds maintenance. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members noted the following:

- **Tree Stock.** There is extensive tree stock in the district and tree planting is based on resource availability to maintain and water. Matured trees are a preferred option for planting as saplings are easily damaged, mainly through vandalism. It was suggested that a volunteer scheme could be established for tree maintenance.
- **Peat.** Although the intention is for the Council to use 100% peat free bedding plants by 2025, some nurseries who supply the plants do not use peat free beds at present.
- **Glyphosate.** The grounds maintenance team used 50 litres of pre-mixed solution in 2019 applied as a spray. The intention is to minimise this usage by trialling other methods which will be reported back to the working group.
- **Grass cutting.** A suggestion was made to reduce cuts to encourage biodiversity, however road safety would need to be taken into consideration. Signage advising residents of reduced cuts, increase growth, encourage biodiversity was a suggested.
- **Japanese Knotweed.** District wide treatment is carried out. The Grounds Maintenance team can also offer chargeable help and advice to all residents with this problem.

*Councillor Wimble left the meeting, due to technical issues, and did not return.*

#### 15. **Update from Laser Energy**

Steve Marks, LASER Energy provided members with a presentation which is attached to these minutes.

Members discussed the provision of renewable energy as part of the Council's purchase agreements. LASER Energy can provide a 'green basket' which offers flexible procurement of renewable energy.

Attention was drawn to Otterpool Park, which was not in the current carbon reduction scope. The Debenhams site falls outside the scope also. At present figures shown are based on 2018/19 which precludes these two sites as the Council did not own all or part of these. However, regularly revisiting of baseline projections was needed to change, review and report on within the Council's operational control.

Looking at East Kent Housing and the planned transfer of stock to this Council, members pointed out that electricity and gas suppliers could be from green

sources, however tenants are responsible for their choice of supplier and not within the Council's control.

The Carbon Reduction Plan document is in development and members were reminded that there must be a clear view of the Council's work programme within the plan.

LASER asked members to complete a Project and Success Factors form in order to help inform LASER of the factors that are the most important to the council. There is no specific technical knowledge required as LASER will provide this input into the exercise. The council will have a chance to review the output before any decisions are made.

Members were also asked to complete a list of initiatives and LASER are simply asking members to rate each one based on the level of public support they feel each initiative would receive. Members can add any other technologies that they feel should be considered if relevant.

On completion of the forms members were asked to return these to Hazel Sargent, Low Carbon & Sustainability Specialist.