

## **Minutes of the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group Meeting**

<b>Date</b>	25 / 07 / 2023
<b>Time</b>	14:00 to 16:00
<b>Location</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Present</b>	Cllr Barry Mellor (Chair) (BM), Cllr Bobby Feeley (BF), Cllr Jonathan B. Harland (JBH), Cllr Martyn Hogg (MH), Cllr Delyth A. Jones (DAJ), Cllr Arwel Roberts (AR), Cllr Michelle Walker (MW).
<b>Apologies</b>	Cllr James Elson (JE), Cllr Paul Keddie (PK), Cllr Peter Scott (PS)
<b>In attendance</b>	Supporting Officers: Gary Williams (GW), Helen Vaughan-Evans (HVE), Sian Owen (SO), Keith Bennett (KB)

### **1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**

Chair BM welcomed all to the first of the resumed meetings following the change of Council, setting the group's focus within the wider context of current international news about heatwaves, wildfires and storms connected with climate change.

Apologies were noted.

### **2. Appointment of a Vice Chair**

MH was proposed as Vice Chair, agreed by all members present and accepted the role.

## 3. Terms of Reference

HVE summarised salient points from the circulated written terms of reference:

- Two representatives from each party/group;
- Agenda and minutes to be published;
- Standing supporting officers: Corporate Director, Governance and Business, senior responsible owner for the Climate and Ecological Change Programme (GW); Climate Change Programme Manager (HVE); and Lead Officer for Communications (SO) plus a minute-taker. Other officers to be invited according to agenda;
- Action-based minutes.

MH questioned external communications. HVE explained the Green Mailing List, where notifications are issued for working group meetings, the officer triage of the climate change email address inbox, and the general expectation that communications would be channelled via local ward members. The Corporate Communications Team will field wider public communications.

## 4. Minutes/Actions from the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes from the last meeting (01/02/2022) were inspected and accepted and the Actions table reviewed. The two ongoing actions were discussed in some detail:

1. Guidance on supporting councillors who sit on both this working group and the planning committee for situations where there appear to be potentially conflicting objectives. GW explained the legislative context of the planning authority exercising statutory duties and making decisions within guidance from national government compared with the local governance behind the constitution of the council and the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency. Where policies overlap, the planning committee does have discretion to weigh material considerations to reach a decision. This working group is not able to influence the planning committee but can recommend local policies through the local development plan process. GW suggested, and the group agreed, to invite a planning officer to a working group meeting to talk further about policy development.

***Action: HVE to issue an invitation to Planning.***

2. Weed control policy, especially herbicides/pesticides. With particular attention to glyphosate, it had been agreed previously that Housing would pilot other options (flame-throwing and hot foam were rejected but mechanical brushing and vinegar-based solutions would be trialled). However, the pilot did not proceed following a change of contractor. Housing is now preparing a new pilot trial. Group discussion widened to the management of wildflower meadows, the associated grass-cutting policy and mixed feedback from residents. The reason for the changed grass-cutting policy was re-stated: ecosystems are vulnerable to the failure of any one element. Protecting bees and allowing wildflower areas to develop into resilient systems has wider benefits. The consensus reached was that following the 2019 declaration of an ecological emergency, the council should stick with its approach for managing grassland for biodiversity. Where specific localised complaints arise, try to find an acceptable balance. HVE thanked members for their time in meeting residents, supporting the approach and helping to convey the messages around tackling the ecological emergency.

***Action: All Cllr Group Members – The current message for members if contacted about long grass is that all end-of-season cut and collect operations are due for completion before the end of September.***

***Action: All Cllr Group Members - Please use C360 as a means to log any issues on Wildflower Meadows from residents to enable a co-ordinated response between Street Scene, Biodiversity and Climate Change teams.***

## **5. Forward Work Programme and Meeting Schedule**

Three meetings per year were suggested and ideas from the group were tabled for future discussion.

Ideas for forward plan included:

Item idea	Potential officer input
How DCC is doing what it can to support climate change mitigation and adaptation actions as well as nature recovery actions in advising and determining planning applications and within the new Local Development Plan	DCC Development Control, DCC Planning Policy
More environmentally friendly options for weed control (options, pilot and widespread implementation)	DCC Street scene, DCC Housing, DCC Biodiversity
Reducing single use plastics in schools	DCC School Catering
Home insulation – how DCC is doing what it can to encourage and support uptake of home insulation in the County (applies in our own buildings also)	Domestic Energy Efficiency Project Team at Flintshire CC (administer ECO4 on Council behalf), DCC Energy Management, DCC Housing
Tree planting and woodland creation on Denbighshire owned land (involvement of young people)	DCC Climate Change, DCC Countryside Services
Supporting agricultural sector within Denbighshire on the proposed new Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales	Welsh Government External Speaker, DCC Valuation and Estates

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Item idea	Potential officer input
Review our land holdings to assess the best use of our land holdings for multiple purposes	WLGA Speaker- Land Use Assessment Tool, Agronomist external speaker, DCC Valuation and Estates
Council owned renewable energy (e.g. Solar Farm) - options for the Council	Welsh Government Energy Service External Speaker, DCC Strategic Asset Management
Litter management involving 'community power' e.g. community litter picks	DCC Street scene, DCC Community Development, External Community, Town & County Council Speaker, External Community Group speaker
Review the built assets the Council owns to explore options which will benefit climate and nature recovery objectives	DCC Corporate Landlord
Peat management across Denbighshire	Natural Resources Wales External speaker, DCC AONB team
Options for reducing carbon emissions from transport across the territory of Denbighshire, e.g. DCC supporting the public	DCC Transport, DCC Planning Policy, DCC

Item idea	Potential officer input
transition to ultra-low emission vehicles across territory of Denbighshire, e.g. EV charging infrastructure- planning and highways considerations of those technologies	Highways, Transport for Wales external speaker

Prioritisation of items were discussed.

**Action: HVE to shape this into a draft forward plan for 2023-2027, 3 meetings per year, for group to approve.**

## 6. Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive Council: 2022/23

### Performance

HVE presented a report on the latest corporate performance data for Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive Council which, in part, was also included in the Annual Performance Report which was presented and approved at Council in July 2023 ([agenda item 7](#)).

The headlines are that:

1. while the trend toward net zero is in the right direction, indications are that the current pace is not sufficient to guarantee achievement of 2030 goal;
2. progress toward ecologically positive is good and the programme manager is cautiously optimistic that 2030 goal can be reached but there are challenges around wildflower meadows as discussed earlier (see Matters Arising;
3. estimates of carbon emissions from DCC's supply chain are still being calculated.

The review of the climate and ecological change strategy will also include consideration of the performance indicators. It will be made clear to readers what the gap is between the desired target and the progress to date and what the constraints are in which DCC is operating. The review is also an opportunity to introduce additional indicators where appropriate to capture the wider influence of the strategy.

The group resolved that it was content to:

- be forthright and transparent on the 2030 goals current performance within the revised strategy;
- expand the basket of the performance measures where appropriate.

MH questioned the appropriateness of a linear trend line- would we instead expect slower start and greater acceleration later in the Programme timeline. MH enquired about the ability to calculate the cumulative impact of individual projects to estimate carbon forecasts and assist prioritisation. BF reminded the group that DCC was one of the first authorities to declare an emergency and reflected that the ambitious 2030 target assists us to accelerate action.

HVE thanked the group for its help in clarifying edits to be made to the strategy.

***Action: HVE to include content within the draft refreshed strategy accordingly for review by this group and Greener Denbighshire Board.***

***Action: HVE to work with Strategic Planning and Performance Team Leader on merits of an alternative to linear trend lines and feed this into the review and refresh of the Strategy and the Performance Management Framework that sits behind it.***

## **7. Review of the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy: Headline Messages from Public Survey**

The survey ran from May to July. 89 responses were received. It was notable that a high proportion of these respondents wished to be involved in a future public workshops to support the review and refresh of the strategy.

The themes from the responses were shared with the group and discussed. The value of the feedback, both positive and negative, was agreed. It was welcomed that residents want to be actively involved.

***Action: HVE will now take public suggestions for topics for inclusion in the strategy to A Greener Denbighshire Board, which may result in new and/or different sections in the refreshed Strategy document.***

***Action: HVE will now take public suggestions for actions/activities/policy/process to service areas, which may result in inclusion in the refreshed strategy.***

## **8. Any Other Business**

Possible dates and times for future meetings were discussed around attendance constraints.

***Action: HVE to email invitations for future meetings.***