

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: 30TH MARCH 2021
title: CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP UPDATE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: MICHELLE HAWORTH – PRINCIPAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present committee with an update from the Climate Change working group and seek financial support for a project.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – The Corporate Plan 2019-2023 includes the objective
- Corporate Priorities – 'To aspire to be a carbon neutral borough by 2030' and a priority action of:
- Other Considerations –
 - To develop an action plan to work towards being a carbon neutral borough by 2030 which is based on a better understanding of our current carbon emissions

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 It was resolved at the November 2019 meeting of this Committee that Committee agreed to the setting up of a Climate Change Working Group with the following representation: Councillors S Atkinson, J Clark, S Bibby, D Berryman, R Thompson and 2 Liberal Democrats (A Knox and S Fletcher).

2.2 The remit of the Working Group is to consider how the Council is meeting the challenge of climate change, both in relation to how the Council provides its own services and how it provides wider support to the community in their efforts to tackle climate change, and to report the findings of the Working Group to the Policy and Finance Committee.

3 UPDATE

3.1 The Working Group has met on four occasions. The minutes of the meetings are attached at Appendix A.

3.2 One of the priority actions in the 2019-2023 Corporate Strategy is 'To develop an action plan to work towards being a carbon neutral borough by 2030 which is based on a better understanding of our current carbon emissions.'

3.3 We are currently in the process of drafting a Climate Change Strategy to cover the period 2021-2030. The strategy will outline the actions we intend to take to ensure we reach our target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2030, consisting of three parts addressing:

- Ribble Valley Borough Council as an organisation - climate change is to be embedded in all the Council's internal activities
- Ribble Valley Borough Council as a service provider - climate change is to be embedded in the Council's services
- Ribble Valley Borough Council as a community leader - the Council will continue to provide clear community leadership by leading through example in the fight against climate change, encouraging businesses and residents to address climate change

3.4 The Climate Change Strategy will be based on an understanding of our current carbon emissions, our carbon footprint, and will address how we intend to reach the target of

being carbon neutral by 2020 through the action plan.

- 3.5 It is intended that the strategy will be presented to this committee for approval by June 2021. The strategy will then be reviewed annually.
- 3.6 The starting point is having a better understanding of what our current carbon footprint is. To help us work out our carbon footprint the working group applied for a £1500 grant from One Carbon World. One Carbon World is a delivery partner of the UN Climate Neutral Now scheme. It helps organisations reduce their carbon footprint by retiring carbon credits, supporting emission reduction and forestry projects that meet the highest standards, reducing carbon emissions and contributing to sustainable development.
- 3.7 Our grant application was successful and this, together with a contribution of £1500 paid by the Council, will provide:
 - A measurement of our carbon footprint (by phone consultation and data collection)
 - Data Validation and Calculation (carbon auditors will calculate our carbon footprint and this will be sent for independent external validation)
 - The One Carbon World International Standard Report (they will produce a carbon footprint report detailing the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the activities measured of the organisation over the footprint period. The report will also provide recommendations for reducing and offsetting the carbon footprint of the organisation)
 - Compensating our unavoidable emissions (carbon credits, certificates – they will offset the footprint, up to a total of 300 tons. This will be achieved through purchasing and retiring carbon credits in the name of the Council. Offsetting enables organisations to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions they cannot avoid by supporting climate-friendly projects that reduce global greenhouse gas emissions)
 - UN Climate Neutral Now Participation

4 REQUEST FOR FUNDING

- 4.1 The Council has received a request for funding support from the Ribble Rivers Trust for a woodland planting scheme.
- 4.2 The working group recognise that in order to become a carbon neutral authority by 2030 we need to look at three areas:
 - Minimising our greenhouse gas emissions
 - Sequestration - the process of 'locking in' greenhouses gases to remove them from the atmosphere, and hence from contributing to climate change. Tree-planting is a typical example, although hedgerows, peat bogs, and some soils can also be used
 - Offsetting is the final stage of the net zero process. This allows the Council to offset unavoidable emissions by funding projects that will lead to equivalent greenhouse gas reductions elsewhere, either locally or globally.
- 4.3 Currently within the UK there are no full carbon offset units (Woodland Carbon Units) available. There are however, Pending Issuance Units (PIUs) which are in essence Carbon futures – certified and validated by a UK government process.
- 4.4 These are also in short supply, with very few, if any, within Lancashire. More resource is required to identifying sites and conduct the work to register the sites for carbon offset accreditation.
- 4.5 The Ribble Rivers Trust project is hoping to:
 - fund resources to actively go and find sites that offer carbon offsets – but also deliver the greatest additional benefit – from flood risk reduction, to physical and mental health benefits

- develop and design the woodland, carry out consultation, as well as to obtain all of the necessary consents, permits and funding to deliver the physical work
 - deliver the woodland, using a combination of contractors and volunteers
 - fund the validation (under the Woodland Carbon Code to obtain PIUs), maintenance and verification of PIUs into WCUs.
- 4.6 For organisations who would like/prefer to offset their emissions locally, and deliver more benefit this process enables that. As otherwise there are no opportunities for offsetting being created.
- 4.7 The carbon itself is sold separately to this process. The PIUs belong to the landowner and/or tenant farmer. This is how the government has set up the carbon code.
- 4.8 Some local authorities have been able to identify, within their own land holdings, land in which they would like Ribble Rivers trust to go through the process, for which they will own the carbon, and then they are able to offset without further cost. The Council has restricted landownership so this is not likely to be the case here. However, the PIUs would be available for purchase by the Council.
- 4.9 We may decide, like some local authorities, to commit as it is more about simply supporting woodland creation.
- 4.10 The working group agreed to make a recommendation to this committee to support the scheme for one year only at a cost of £15,000.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources - £15,000 to be funded from Business Rate Growth for year one of the Ribble Rivers Trust tree planting project and £1500 towards the One Carbon World Grant.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None identified.
 - Political – None identified.
 - Reputation – None identified.
 - Equality & Diversity - None identified.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Agree a grant of £15,000 for the Ribble Rivers Trust woodland planting project.

Michelle Haworth
PRINCIPAL POLICY AND
PERFORMANCE OFFICER

Jane Pearson
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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

REF:

For further information please ask for Michelle Haworth, extension 4421