



Minutes of Crediton Town Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Committee held on Tuesday 8 April 2021 at 19.00 via Zoom

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Brookes-Hocking, Mr G Cochran, Mr G Huxtable, Mr J Ross and Mr P Vincent

Apologies: Cllr Mr J Downes

In Attendance: Mrs Rachel Avery, Town Clerk
1 member of the public

1. To elect a Chairman

Nominations were received for the position of Chairman. Cllr Ross **proposed** Cllr Brookes-Hocking. Cllr Huxtable **proposed** Cllr Vincent. It was **resolved** that Cllr Vincent be elected as Chairman (3:2).

Cllr Vincent welcomed all members of the public watching the meeting via Facebook. He requested that all councillors offer their individual ideas on the content of these meetings. Cllr Brookes-Hocking stated that the committee should have included the word 'emergency' in its title, and should focus on the internal practices of the council in relating to the climate emergency. She stated that the 'Friends of the Earth' statement should be considered at all times and the committee should find pertinent ways of moving forward.

Cllr Ross stated an interest in reviewing council policy, procedure and practice in relation to sustainability and the effect of climate change.

Cllr Cochran stated that he wished to focus on where the council can reduce its carbon footprint where achievable and feasible, alongside working on policy and procedure.

Cllr Huxtable agreed with looking at the council's internal workings, but was also interested in supporting community initiatives.

Cllr Vincent reminded those present of the meeting of the council, where a letter relating to climate change was received from two children. He highlighted the importance of the word 'emergency' and suggested that this committee should meet at least weekly.

A further statement from the Chairman forms part of the minutes.

2. To receive and accept apologies

It was **resolved** to approve apologies from Cllr Downes.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public Question Time

Mrs Dee Ross was in attendance to support the committee, and stated that the aim of the original sub-committee was to look at council practice. However, the remit had changed considerably.

5. Order of Business

There were no changes to the order of business.

6. Chairman's and Clerk's Announcements

There were no announcements.

7. To discuss the Terms of Reference in relation to a programme of delivery

Consideration was given to the review of council policies, with the following points being made:

- use of weed killer
- budgets
- procurement contracts in council-owned areas
- management of council-owned areas
- amount of times grass is cut
- community organisation support.

Cllr Cochran stated that achievable targets for the future should be set, in order to be able to measure progress.

Cllr Ross advised that town council land should be managed in a more sustainable way, including the employment of contractors and their environmental procedures. However, this would involve additional expense and fewer available contractors and should be a phased process. He highlighted that local groups had taken responsibility or some areas in the town belonging to MDDC.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking reported that the use of weedkiller in the town should be managed, with a view to enabling individuals to tidy in their own streets. She stated that there is currently no policy for weedkilling, with Cllr Vincent stating that policies should be created to deal with areas in council ownership.

Cllr Cochran agreed that policies would be integral, which may affect other organisations in the town with regard to becoming more sustainable. He suggested that the council was in a good position to lead by example.

Cllr Huxtable agreed, and confirmed the importance of ensuring the council had its policies and procedures in order. He stated that policies should be assessed further in relation to sustainability and to look at other areas such as tree planting and office output in areas such as photocopying. It was **agreed** that Cllrs Cochran and Huxtable would assess policies remotely and liaise with the Town Clerk.

Additional issues were discussed, including:

- partnership working with existing community groups
- provision of grants to community groups, with a view to supporting those with green credentials, whilst noting that some may find this difficult if challenged

There was discussion relating to facilitation, with Cllr Ross stating that some members were keen on arranging events. He felt that the council was not best placed to undertake this, but to support groups that already do. Cllr Vincent asked if Cllr Ross wished to declare an interest in Sustainable Crediton. Cllr Ross stated that he is the council's Sustainable Crediton representative and his wife is the chair.

8. To agree a meeting schedule

It was **resolved** that meetings would take place of the second Thursday of each month.

Cllr Vincent stated that he would like to facilitate informal meetings of the committee to discuss

issues between scheduled committee meetings. Cllr Ross stated that he would only be able to attend meetings held virtually.

9. To agree the date of the next meeting

It was **resolved** that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 13 May 2021 at 19.00. The meeting was closed at 6.54pm.

Signed.....
(Chairman)

Date:.....

Appendix 1 – Statement from Chairman

Welcome to the first assembly of the reformulated Climate Change & Sustainability Committee. Following an appeal by two Crediton primary school-children in 2018, the Town Council agreed to respond to the crisis of climate change and associated issues. By serving on this committee, members recognise that even a small parish or town council has a part to play in addressing issues of global significance in appropriate local ways.

In 2019 the Town Council went on to declare both Climate and Environmental Emergencies. *It will be an on-going challenge of this committee to address the meaning of 'emergency' not just as a rhetorical term, but increasingly at face value.*

As one of two candidates for Chair, I am grateful that, following the election (on a narrow majority) members were happy to move on directly to a friendly exchange on what our committee is about - both in broad terms, and including flagging up a number of specific delivery targets.

On a personal note, I would like to thank members for their extraordinary forbearance in putting up with my own strident and sometimes personal criticisms of late across a range of Council matters. I hope that, in chairing this committee, I shall repay members' trust (provisional in some cases?) by leading discussions in as fair and inclusive way as possible.

In our upcoming discussions the committee may already enjoy a broad consensus over some issues. In these I hope members will volunteer their experience to create proposals that can be sure of effective delivery by the Town Council.

With the indefinite scope and ambition of our remit, and the wide range of individual concerns, I hope that members will also generously volunteer their support in developing ideas raised by even a single member. In this way all members may be encouraged to bring forward imaginative ideas, knowing that they will have the benefit of achieving a positive consensus.

All ideas are good. The answer is not 'No' - or even silence, but 'Yes, and how?'