

Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group meeting 5th August 2024

Attendance: Cllrs Hood, Coulter & Jones (later), Dee Mullis, Jane Durney, Nick Truman, Charles Couzens and 1 member of public

MEETING BEGUN AT 7:30pm

24/001: Election of Chair.

Cllr Hood was proposed and elected as Chair

24/002: Election of Vice Chair.

It was agreed to not elect a Vice Chair.

Opportunity for public session.

The member of public was interested in the workshop and therefore came along to learn more this evening rather than to raise a specific issue.

24/003: Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972 s85(1)).

Cllr Jones sent apologies for lateness.

24/004: Notes of the previous meeting.

To receive and approve the notes from the last meeting held on 1st July 2024.

There were no comments and therefore the notes were approved.

24/005: To review the Terms of Reference for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group.

This item was re-ordered to discuss the below item first.

24/006: One Planet Actions Workshop and Plan.

To discuss feedback from the 6 July 2024 workshop, and agree which actions should be included in the plan, and decide on the next steps to be taken in putting the plan together.

The workshop on 6th July was well received and there were a list of actions voted for. Jane Durney and James Hood had agreed to bring the feedback and the previous CEEWG work to this meeting so that the group could prioritise actions. The principles in the draft plan were shared in the group for review and discussion:-

ZERO CARBON ENERGY

- Street lights off at night attracted the most votes. This is something that is not within the Town Council's power, but it is something that could be lobbied for. It was suggested that this is more of a nature issue than a carbon energy saving one and therefore this was agreed to be moved to Land and Nature.

- Use rivers and streams for hydro.
- Discourage the use of Fossil Fuels for heating - It was agreed that the Town Council should not be supporting any planning involving the use of fossil fuels. There were several items raised which relate to planning, and it appears that an overhaul of the Council's policy is needed.
- Continue to encourage the use of heat pumps - There has already been work on this and it was agreed that it should be continued. Cllr Hood clarified that the Town Council can recommend rejection of planning applications for more than one reason. The policy justification should include that in the long-term fossil fuels will likely be more expensive which locks residents into an expensive fuel as well as for environmental reasons.
- Power Generation - establish some generation capacity in Bruton by way of investment in extensive solar power. Seek the opportunity for solar generation on roof and on land, both should be maximised. General agreement that this needed to be included: the exact text could be polished up at a later stage. .
- Tree planting – There is currently a Somerset Tree Strategy and trees are being tracked that are planted in Somerset, there is a lot of energy for this at county level. It was discussed that trees don't do much for carbon capture in the short-term and so where this is important, it should also be moved to land and nature.
- Encouraging Businesses to share their practices with each other as there are some that do a huge amount, so it would be helpful to encourage more knowledge sharing perhaps via the Chamber of Commerce.

EJ arrived at 7:49pm

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

- At the workshop there was lots of discussion about buses, and a desire for frequent and regular services.
- The connection between bus and train services should be highlighted. A bus stop at the train station would be a start, but this could be a challenge with the space at the station.
- Councillor Jones pointed out that this linked to the discussion about the need for access to the westbound platform.
- Train services also need to be regular and comprehensible.
- Car sharing was popular at the workshop and needs to be encouraged.
- What journeys are being made and why, can this be reduced? It was discussed that this could be helped through more local jobs, more information sharing for newcomers including public transport info and local shop facilities. The newcomers' letter given to estate agents needs to be reviewed at Full Council .
- The Town Council planning policy should be reviewed against these principles.
- Measure and reduce – encourage people to become aware of their carbon impact. This would also be helpful as a baseline to track progress. This could be measured by survey, however, it was noted that the council had agreed not to carry out another town plan survey for the time being.
- EV charging –This need will increase over time and it was agreed for this to remain in the plan. Solutions that are used elsewhere could be explored.

SUSTAINABLE WATER

- Compulsory water storage and grey water harvesting should be included as part of review the Town Council planning policy.
- No Slurry Farming – was a theme at the workshop. There was a local farmer at the workshop who raised that there is real lack of understanding around this locally. It was clarified that what was meant was no slurry spreading on fields. Just to state this is unhelpful for farmers. A phrase about celebrating/sharing good practice in farming was suggested as an alternative.
- The slowing of flow –This can be linked to flooding. This sits within Brue Crew’s remit.

MATERIALS AND PRODUCTS

- There is a lot already happening in Bruton led by One Planet Bruton. We agreed it was not necessary to come up with new actions for every principle: we can give examples and the plan can say continue to support.

ZERO WASTE

Continue to encourage and support existing initiatives as above.

LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

- A regular food market was very popular at the workshop. Has already been tried in Bruton. A stall alongside the coffee mornings was suggested, at which surplus produce could be sold.
- The Redlynch project could be an aspiration to replicate, encouraging self-production of vegetables.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

- Welcome pack for new residents - Make more use of the welcome pack to share information about local initiatives with newcomers. The welcome pack needs a review by this group and by the Council.
- Model community engagement: Hoedown and other One Planet Bruton initiatives are working well and are good examples of community participation. New volunteers have joined in which is great. Continue to encourage and support.
- Also continue to encourage and support the work of Good Company.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

- Outreach - Creating locations and activities which are attractive to those who don’t feel included.
- Access to sports facilities - Bruton Schools do have facilities but they are not currently open to the community. The new head teacher at Sexey’s could be approached.
- Providing venues and space/looking at what we have and enabling access. (This also relates to the public transport issue. Balsam centre is a great facility, but again, access is a problem. It would be good to provide a space in Bruton).

LAND AND NATURE –

- This was the most engaged topic at the workshop and the Town Council could have more of an impact with this item.
- Wildlife corridors – Aim for funding for a habitat inventory in the parish to help guide the plan. Might well be supported by volunteers, and would be helpful for many purposes eg developing wildlife corridors.
- Swifts project – There is a Sherborne initiative called save our swifts (SOS). There is appetite for this in Bruton too, perhaps modelling on Sherborne. Also a planning issue.
- Another Haddon Woods: popular at workshop. Noted that wood pasture is more important ecologically. The kind of initiative that would attract community engagement.
- Land ownership – schools/farms/businesses - King’s school seem to have stopped managing their land near the tennis courts – they used to cut it and take everything away and it was suggested to contact the bursar about this. Spraying has also been witnessed along the Abbey Wall today, which needs addressing as we cannot afford to be spraying anywhere with so few butterflies and bees.
- Rebranding scrub – Scrub is a very good thing and very much overlooked. Promoting with a survey of scrub for wildlife 6 times a year and publicising this information – “The Somerset Savannah”

EQUITY AND LOCAL ECONOMY

- Control of AirBnBs: another item for the Planning Policy review.
- Planning policy and affordable housing - The community wants to be involved in town developments. Scrutinise the environmental credentials of developers, but not just what they plan to do, environmental proposals. New planning principles to be adopted.
- More truly affordable housing – suggested that there is nothing we can do in the sale market, there is a possibility with rentals. A community land trust is possible with a willing landowner who will work in partnership with community to form a trust to protect the land and guard how it will be used. It was suggested that Wyke Farms would like to do something like this, and it is something to take to Town Council.

NEXT STEPS

Once the minutes are written Cllr Hood and Jane Durney will draw up a draft plan to be brought to the next meeting.

24/005: To review the Terms of Reference for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group.

It was suggested that there needs to be a different mechanism for reporting back to the Town Council and this item was deferred to the next meeting.

24/007: Date of the next meeting of the working group: The next CEEWG meeting is Monday 7th October 2024, 7.30pm at the Community Hall.

END OF MEETING AT 9:06PM