

## ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a VIRTUAL meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 499-886-229) of the CLIMATE ACTION SUB COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 11.00am.

PRESENT Cllr Rose Allwork Karen Hunt  
Ian Bark Dave Rickard  
Kelvin Clayton

ALSO PRESENT: Will Austin (Town Clerk), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), David Dixon (Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer), Derek Moss (Low Carbon Dorset), Pete West (Dorset Community Energy) Alan Heeks (Seeding Our Future) and Raja Jarrah (Seeding Our Future).

### PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised at the Public Forum.

### 18. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

### 19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 20. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the committee held on 26 October 2020 be agreed and signed by the Chairman at the earliest practicable opportunity.

### 21. ENERGY LOCAL BRIDPORT

Pete West of Dorset Community Energy and Derek Moss of Low Carbon Dorset gave a presentation on local energy generation. Pete provided background to Dorset Community Energy and the Energy Local Bridport initiative. Derek gave an update on progress with Energy Local Bridport which was recruiting customers ahead of a launch. Feasibility work was being undertaken on photovoltaic arrays to add to local generation.

Members discussed:

- Whether locally supplied energy might be cheaper.
- Possible targeting of community buildings as local energy customers.
- How local households might contribute to energy generation, which was being investigated.
- The impact of increased levels of home working.
- The possibility of additional turbines on local privately owned land.
- Whether people in fuel poverty would benefit from local energy generation.

\*\*\*Alan Heeks of Seeding Our Future joined the meeting at this point\*\*\*

- The 'green' credentials of Octopus, a partner in the local energy initiative.
- Whether the Town Council needed to be a customer of Energy Local Bridport in order to contribute to its energy generation. It was confirmed that this was not a requirements.
- The earliest date by which the Town Council could join the initiative as an energy generator, which was estimated to be January 2021, or six months later if the intention was to profit from this.
- The earliest date by which the Town Council could join the initiative as an energy customer, which was advised as being at least six months away.
- The need to expand renewable energy generation, and for this to form part of the Dorset Council Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy .
- The benefit of small-scale local generation in engaging people in the issue of climate change.

The Chairman thanked Pete and Derek for their attendance and input.

RESOLVED: that the presentations be noted.

## **22. SEEDING OUR FUTURE**

A proposal and request for funding had been circulated with the agenda, and Alan Heeks of Seeding Our Future confirmed that the requested funding was expected to be matched from other sources.

Members considered the proposal and discussed:

- The welcome progression of this initiative which gave encouragement to local people.
- The wide range of local groups engaged in the issue of food security.
- The need to move away from online channels for purchasing food and other goods, and to encourage local buying.
- The Town Council's existing engagement with many of the groups involved in food security.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £2,000 be awarded to Seeding Our Future, funded from the Climate Emergency reserve.

## **23. SOLAR PV CAR PORT INSTALLATION**

The Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer reported that a minimum of three quotes was needed for this project, which was to install solar PV panels on car port structures at Plottingham Car Park. Two quotes had been received and a third was being developed through local contractors. The cost was estimated at approximately £50,000. A preferred option would be developed and reported to the sub committee in December. A grant application to Low Carbon Dorset was to be finalised.

Members discussed:

- The potential impact of membership of Energy Local Bridport on the grant application. Derek Moss reminded members that the application would need to show innovation, and that local energy generation would do this.
- The need to develop a Town Council carbon budget, to include the contribution of the solar PV car ports.
- Whether a locally installed car port structure would meet the requirements of national PV panel installers. The Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer confirmed that quotes were being provided on the basis of this approach.
- The need to incorporate historic data into the carbon budget.
- The need to publicise this initiative as part of the effort to engage the community in the issue of climate change.
- The welcome engagement with local potential suppliers.
- The possibility of additional installations at Bridport Football Club Car Park, which was being investigated by the Town Surveyor.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer be noted.

#### **24. DIVESTMENT & INVESTMENT OPTIONS**

The Town Clerk reported on investigation into a more ethical approach to Town Council deposits and investments. Details of the liquidity of Town Council funds had been circulated prior to the meeting, as had details of the approach taken by Frome Town Council. Further work would be required to reach an agreed definition of 'ethical', and agreement to revision of the Financial Regulations and Investment Strategy, through the Best Value & Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The operational impact of changes would also need to be considered.

Members discussed:

- The need for a timeline to set out revisions to the Investment Strategy, and their passage through committees as appropriate.
- Getting further information on the approach taken by other councils.
- The balance of operational and ethical issues.
- Use of consumer reports to inform a decision on appropriate banks and financial institutions.
- The inclusion of an ethical context alongside the issues of security, liquidity and yield in a revised Investment Strategy.
- The operational issues involved in a change to investments and banking.

RESOLVED: that members should forward their views on what constitutes ethical investment to the Town Clerk, for inclusion in a draft revised Investment Strategy to be considered by Best Value & Scrutiny Sub Committee.

#### **25. GREEN ENERGY SUPPLIES**

The Town Clerk reported that he and the Finance & Office Manager had been working with the Council's energy broker to establish the feasibility and costs associated with changing energy suppliers to Octopus Energy whilst still under contract to other suppliers, as had previously been discussed at the sub committee. All but a few of the existing contracts were due to expire in March 2022. Following some confusion, it now appeared that the change could be made but that the

estimated cost was in the region of £27,000 if all accounts were transferred. In the course of investigating this, advice had been received from both the broker and Dorset Community Energy suggesting that Octopus was not the optimal supplier in terms of green energy credentials. Members were asked to consider next steps.

Members discussed:

- The prohibitive cost of switching suppliers, and the potential for more productive use of this cost in contributing to the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- The possibility of moving to more renewable tariffs with the existing suppliers.
- Consideration of Bulb Energy as an alternative.
- The need for a plan to achieve the greenest approach by March 2022.
- The need to consider the financial sustainability of suppliers.

RESOLVED: that further information be gathered to assist in the development of an ethical energy procurement policy to be considered by the Best Value & Scrutiny Sub Committee and the Climate Action Sub Committee.

## **26. COMMUNICATIONS AND UPDATES ON OTHER ISSUES**

The Chairman advised that the next agenda would include consideration of a response to a consultation by Dorset Council on its Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

## **27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Sub Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 17 December at 11.00am.

The meeting closed at 1.01pm.