

NOTES ON A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

24th January 2022 via Zoom

Attendees: Cllr John Turner (JT), (Chair), Cllr Ed Langridge (EL), Alan Ford (AF), Simon Norton (SN) and Lizzie Pannell (LP)

In attendance: Catherine Barrett (CB) Assistant Clerk

Apologies for absence received from: Cllr Ben Scarbrough (work commitments) and Ken Howe (personal commitments)

1. Recruitment of a new working group Member of Public

JT said he was keen to attract parish residents of all ages and circumstances to work with the EWG. He re-introduced the idea of asking school age children from the parish to become involved, as discussed at previous meetings. He asked members to keep in mind the engagement of a wider audience as they worked their way through the agenda.

2. KCC Electric Vehicle Charger (EVC) trialling scheme

JT reported that the parish council's application had been accepted subject to a site assessment, allocation of funding and a formal agreement between KCC and the parish council. He explained that a working party from the Governance committee had reviewed and commented on the EVC contract sent by KCC. A site visit from KCC's contractors is expected to further assess suitability. However, they also indicated that funding for this scheme is proving challenging, so all site visits have been put on hold until extra sources of KCC funding have been established.

3. Q1 Energy Saving/household tips communications plan

It was agreed that the tips included on the power-point JT had shared previously could be incorporated into the Q1 communications campaign. They could be amalgamated into a single page pull-out for parish magazines and divided into a series of photos for the website and social media.

There was some discussion on how to reach more people and SN asked how many people visited the parish council website. CB explained that between 350 and 500 residents went to the website for information each month, and some of these had signed up for news alerts. Others followed the Facebook page and others followed community Facebook groups where CB also shared the parish council's posts. Some still relied on parish magazines for info, and some would read the bi-annual newsletter which was available in hard copy and electronically. A few residents would still remember to look at village noticeboards.

The challenge was that this still didn't reach everyone and there was an item on the next full council agenda to discuss how to get as many residents' email addresses as possible, so that important updates could be shared with them (in line with GDPR regulations). Possible options were to write to every household (although this had environmental implications) or include a feature in TWBC's Local Magazine, which already went to every household, asking residents to submit their email addresses for this purpose.

It was agreed that a number of local children and young people could be reached through contacting schools, guide/scout groups and youth clubs.

EL suggested creating a suitable variation on the existing parish council logo to include on all future EWG communications to make more of an impact. An action point was set for EL to look into this.

4. Q2 Biodiversity communications plan

SN had drafted a plan, with input from KH and AF. It included a combination of 'quick wins' and longer-term strategies. It was agreed that the first part of the plan would focus on encouraging and supporting any residents who would like to enhance the biodiversity on their land via a reduced mowing approach. An action point was set for LP to investigate designs for variations on the "don't mow, let it grow" slogan. The idea would be to supply residents with mini marker signs which they could put out on their front lawns explaining why they were letting their grass grow.

The next part of the plan would be to designate the pocket park in Roopers, Speldhurst, as an official area for biodiversity and use the space to demonstrate to residents what could be done to enhance biodiversity in their own gardens. An action point was set for JT to ask Full Council if this was possible. It was agreed to discuss finding a biodiversity expert to work alongside AF and advertising educational biodiversity sessions at the pocket park at the next meeting.

The working group discussed the idea of giving residents insect hotels or packets of wildflower seeds. An action point was set for JT to ask full council how much budget could be allocated for this, together with the cost of producing markers to go on lawns.

5. Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan review

The parish council had been invited to respond to a review of the Kent Minerals and Waste local plan as part of the consultation process. JT summarised the review for the working group and after some discussion it was agreed that it was unnecessary for the parish council to respond.

6. SPC statement of commitment to addressing climate emergency

JT had written a first draft for members' consideration. It was agreed that the statement should be made shorter and more direct. An action point was set for CB to work on the statement with JT before sending to Cllr Pate for his review and feedback. As Chairman, the statement would likely go out in his name.

7. Any other business

It was agreed that the working group would carry over their discussion on recruiting new members and engaging more residents until the next meeting. By then the parish council's climate emergency statement would have been shared with residents.

The next meeting was scheduled for **Tuesday 22nd February at 7pm.**

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.