

## **CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP – INITIAL REPORT**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The Climate Change Task and Finish Group has, on behalf of Members, examined the Climate Change motion referred by the Council to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This report presents the initial findings of the Group for consideration by the Panel.

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

- 2.1 The terms of reference for the Climate Change Task and Finish Group are as follows:-

1. To consider the Climate Change motion referred to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel by the Council and to make recommendations to the Panel on the motion or any proposed alternative.
2. To work in collaboration with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services and partners in the development of the Council's Corporate Plan from 2020 onwards, with regard to the impact of a changing climate.

- 2.2 In presenting this initial report, the Group considers that it has completed its work in respect of item 1 of the terms of reference, with further work for the Portfolio Holder to engage with relevant Members moving forward.

- 2.3 The membership of the Group is as follows:-

Cllr Sue Bennison  
Cllr Geoffrey Blunden  
Cllr Stephanie Osborne  
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)  
Cllr Derek Tipp  
Cllr Malcolm Wade

Cllr Alison Hoare attends the Task and Finish Group meetings as the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services.

### **3. WORK AND FINDINGS OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

- 3.1 At their first meeting, the above terms of reference were agreed and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services addressed the Group to update on the progress already made by the Council in respect of climate change.
- 3.2 The Group went on to consider the Climate Change motion in detail, over the course of two meetings. A majority view was expressed that the Council should not declare a climate emergency, but instead work to develop an environment action plan, incorporated within the Council's Corporate Plan, which held the overall ambition to become carbon neutral as a District Council by 2050.
- 3.3 Contrary views were expressed that the issue of climate change would not be taken seriously unless the Council made a firm commitment to passing a motion.
- 3.4 The Group considered some benchmark figures in relation to the Council's carbon footprint based on energy usage and vehicle mileage. They were informed of the work

the Council has undertaken to reduce emissions including installing solar panels, energy saving lighting and more recently considering the procurement of some electric fleet vehicles . These figures are incomplete at this stage and it is proposed to consider the baseline data further once it is fully collated by officers.

- 3.5 Following consideration of the data, the Group wish to identify actions in the Environment Action Plan which will reduce emissions over future years and determine how these can be measured to identify their impact.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

#### **5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An agreement to move ahead with an environment action plan would have a positive impact in identifying any steps the Council can take to protect and enhance the local position in respect of environmental issues, including climate change.

#### **7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

#### **8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 8.1 I fully support the recommendation made by the Climate Change task and Finish Group and I am looking forward to working with members and partners to develop an Environment Action Plan. I would like to thank officers and the Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine, for their work exploring and discussing in depth the subject of Climate Change and the challenges ahead.

#### **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel:-

- (a) Note the initial report of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group; and
- (b) Request that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services works with partners and relevant Members in the development of an environment action plan.

That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel advise the Council that:-

- (a) The Panel does not support the motion referred to the Panel by the Council; and
- (b) Whilst the Panel recognises that other Councils have declared a climate emergency, this Council can achieve more on a local level through the development of an environment action plan, with the ambition of achieving a carbon neutral position for the New Forest District Council by 2050. Once developed, the action plan should give prominence within the Council's

Corporate Plan to ensure that environmental issues, including climate change, are taken into account in future decision making.

**Further information:**

Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine  
Task and Finish Group Chairman

**Background Papers:**

Task and Finish Group working papers

**Enquiries:**

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