



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **CLIMATE EMERGENCY OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in
David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40
1BN on **MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 1 December 2023

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. The Committee considers submissions from a range of sources and reaches conclusions based on the weight of evidence – not on party political grounds.

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council’s Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams, please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be viewed live using the following link:

<https://youtube.com/live/lvLkyBHgTE?feature=share>

This meeting may be filmed for inclusion on the Council’s website. Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council’s control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. • Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow. • Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment. • Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions. • Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure. • Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough. • Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillors

Andy Croy
Norman Jorgensen
Ian Pittock

Michael Firmager
Graham Howe
Charles Margetts

Chris Johnson
Catherine Glover
Alistair Neal

Substitutes

Andrew Mickleburgh
Andrew Gray
Laura Blumenthal

Jane Ainslie
Pauline Helliar-Symons
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Anne Chadwick
Clive Jones
Shahid Younis

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
28		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
29		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	5 - 12
30		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
31		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions. A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this Committee. Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
32		MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any Member questions.	
33	None Specific	CLIMATE EMERGENCY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN To scrutinise the Climate Emergency Engagement and Communications Plan.	13 - 28
34	Barkham	BARKHAM SOLAR FARM UPDATE To scrutinise progress on the Barkham Solar Farm project.	29 - 32

35	None Specific	WORK PROGRAMME To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24.	33 - 34
36	None Specific	ACTION TRACKER To consider the regular Action Tracker Report.	35 - 38

CONTACT OFFICER

Neil Carr	Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Tel	0118 974 6000
Email	neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk
Postal Address	Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.45 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Andy Croy (Chair), Chris Johnson (Vice-Chair), David Cornish, Michael Firmager, Catherine Glover, Norman Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Ian Pittock and Anne Chadwick

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Sarah Kerr and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Rob Bradfield, Head of Procurement, Contracts & Commercialisation
Andrew Collins, Climate Emergency Specialist
Ian Gough, Energy Manager
Rhian Hayes, Assistant Director, Economic Development & Growth
David Smith, Development & Planning Manager - Commercial Property

18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Graham Howe.

Anne Chadwick attended the meeting as a substitute.

19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Andy Croy and Ian Pittock declared personal interests in Item 25 – Barkham Solar Farm Update – as they were both members of the Solar Farm Programme Board.

21 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

22 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

22.1 Councillor Gary Cowan asked the Chair the following question:

Question

The Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee is set up to scrutinise the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

I asked the Head of Planning and Policy by email if a blanket temporary Tree Preservation Order could be put on Hall Farm while the proposals for the site are evolving. The answer was a definite no, but he did add that any trees on the boundary that warranted protection might be considered in their own right.

This would suggest that houses are more important than the protection of our trees including our environment. Flora, fauna and the risk of flooding all play second fiddle to housing, putting trees within any proposed development site in Wokingham all at risk.

There are many examples to date, where the lack of urgency by the Council's Planning, Tree and Landscape Departments has led to the wholesale destruction of many trees and the consequences of that on the climate emergency is immeasurable. Houses first, trees and the environment second.

My question is: will the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that the Local Plan Update emerging policy adds such a policy to the plan as it will be a significant move designed to protect our environment against climate change?

To do so will show a genuine commitment to fighting climate change and not to do so will indicate to our residents that Wokingham Borough Council's Lib Dem administration can talk the talk, but not walk the walk.

Answer

Thank you for your question. I appreciate, and I hope your residents do too, your stout defence of your community.

The Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CEOSC) recognises the importance of the Local Plan Update and that is why we had a session earlier this year where we engaged extensively with the responsible officers and the Executive member on the LPU's importance to our Climate Emergency response. I do not think blanket TPOs for any part of the Borough came up.

I would be reluctant to recommend a blanket bank TPO for Hall Farm, the Borough as a whole or any other area, for this Committee to discuss. The Borough, at your instigation I think, adopted a Tree Strategy in June 2023 - just three months ago and the feasibility of implementing Borough-wide blanket TPOs was discussed and considered by officers, councillors and consultants working on the development of the strategy. A recommendation such as the one you requested would effectively overwrite the Tree Strategy.

Even if every tree in Hall Farm had a TPO it would not, as you assert "be a significant move designed to protect our environment against climate change" as there are simply not enough of them in that area. For comparison, the total impact of all the tree and hedge planting aimed for in the plan (170 hectares) brings a carbon saving of just 1% of the total carbon savings in the plan.

This Committee prioritises its work by the relative importance of any item on the whole plan and our climate emergency response as a whole and I cannot see the impact of any trees lost at Hall Farm being of significant climate emergency magnitude to justify the Committee's time to examine this issue. There are, bluntly, more, bigger issues to look at.

I do appreciate the amenity, social and scenic value of trees but the Tree Strategy and current TPO policy must be the way of protecting trees of value.

It may be that you wish to ensure particular trees are protected so the link to the TPO process is here:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/roadworks-and-outdoor-maintenance/trees-hedges-and-grass-cutting/tree-preservation-orders-tpos>

In the CEAP, trees come under Priority 4: Carbon Sequestration should you want to follow up on this area. The 4th report of the CEAP should soon be available here:

<https://engage.wokingham.gov.uk/en-GB/folders/taking-action-climate-emergency>

The Tree Strategy is here:

<https://engage.wokingham.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/creating-a-tree-strategy>

Finally, this Committee is not a part of the administration. Officers and Executive Members are subject to robust scrutiny and I invite you to review past videos of our work and to tune into future meetings to assure yourself of this.

Supplementary Question

I am disappointed in that, in the sense that in the past the Council has put blanket TPOs on proposed developments because the basic policy on trees is that, if trees are at risk, the Council will put TPOs on them as a means of protection while the development moves forwards. To imply that a TPO on 170 hectares of land would only impact on 1% of trees – I would say that 1% is better than 0%.

I do not wish to be critical of the Committee and do recognise that it is not part of the administration, but I was hoping that you would look beyond narrow boundaries. By not agreeing to this principle, not specifically for Hall Farm, but the principle of TPOs on large developments while work is constructed, you are really saying “houses before trees” – trees don’t matter. This is more a comment than a question and I am happy to leave it at that, but thank you for your answer.

23 PROCUREMENT REPORT ON CEAP ACTIONS

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 13 to 20, which gave details of the actions taken by the WBC corporate Procurement team to enable and support the CEAP Action Plan.

Rob Bradfield, Head of Procurement, Contracts and Commercialisation, attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report stated that the CEAP included the following Procurement-related actions:

- Action 8.1: By the end of 2024, achieve sustainable procurement practice throughout the Council as part of Corporate Procurement Strategy.
- Action 8.1.1: Include a drafted approach to sustainable procurement within review of the Procurement Strategy.
- Action 8.1.2: Develop a sustainable procurement culture and associated skills for green procurement.
- Action 8.1.3: Assess suppliers on sustainable procurement standards.
- Action 8.1.4 Implement sustainable procurement KPIs amongst suppliers.
- Action 8.2: By the end of 2024, the Council will consider social value, including carbon neutrality, in all its procurement cycles.
- Action 8.2.1: Adopt a WBC Social Value Policy.
- Action 8.2.2: Promote local skills and employment.

The report stated that the carbon savings associated with the above set of actions were neutral within the CEAP as they applied to future contracts. It was difficult to change the terms of existing contracts, so these changes did not deliver identifiable additional savings, but instead aimed to minimise any 'new' emissions being generated.

The report gave details of completed actions and progress against the remaining actions, including:

- Introduction of the Corporate Strategy for Procurement, Commissioning and Contract Management – approved in July 2021.
- New governance process, involving oversight of all procurements by a Strategic Procurement Board.
- Introduction of a Procurement business partnering module – this provides more frequent contact between services and procurement specialists.
- Introduction of a new governance and approval process – providing more sign-off and approval levels.
- Involvement of the CEAP team in market engagement activities relating to contracts.
- Involvement of the CEAP team in the development of KPIs underpinning contracts.
- 30% of tender evaluation to focus on quality including climate emergency as an element of social value – the climate emergency element to be at the discretion of officers.

The report stated that work was ongoing to establish a social value policy for the Council which would include climate emergency consideration. Procurement officers were also supporting the CEAP team in the development of e-learning modules for staff and new starters through the induction process.

In the ensuing discussion, Member raised the following points and questions:

Had any significant procurement exercises taken place since the approval of the Climate Emergency Action Plan? If so, was there any evidence that the Procurement related provisions led to an increase in cost? It was confirmed that officers would review recent Procurement activity and provide feedback for Members.

As tender evaluation was 70% on cost and 30% (including Climate Emergency provisions) on quality, it should not be assumed that sustainability led to increased costs. The benefits of sustainable service delivery should be emphasised as part of the Procurement process. If Procurement was seen as a toolkit then the CEAP provisions should be embedded throughout the process.

In relation to the tendering process, how were the CEAP provisions highlighted? It was confirmed that the CEAP provisions were included in the specification, KPIs and the contract management process.

In relation to the Corporate Strategy for Procurement, Commissioning and Contract Management – the report stated that officers were “prompted” to consider Climate Emergency as part of every procurement. Should this language be strengthened to “require” rather than prompt.

In relation to meetings held by officers with contract responsibilities to discuss best practice, including Climate Emergency measures – the report stated that the CEAP team

attend some of these meetings. Should the CEAP team attend all relevant meetings? It was confirmed that the CEAP team was small and, consequently, had to focus on attending discussions relating to the more significant contracts.

When was the 70/30 split in tender evaluation approved? It was confirmed that the 70/30 split was included in the 2021 Corporate Strategy for Procurement, Commissioning and Contract Management. The Strategic Procurement Board was able to adjust the price/quality balance in relation to specific projects. So, for example, the Barkham Solar Farm evaluation was based on 45% price, 45% quality and 10% social value.

Were Procurement and Contract Management staff trained in sustainability? It was confirmed that officers were trained in sustainability issues as part of their professional development. The CEAP team were brought in to support the process as and when necessary.

The report stated that suppliers were becoming more enthusiastic and committed to addressing the Climate Emergency. How was this measured? What assessment was carried out to confirm that suppliers carried out their stated behaviours? It was confirmed that suppliers were required to provide supporting evidence as part of the procurement process. This included any “carbon neutral” claims and the use of electric vehicles.

Members discussed the potential relevance of the ISO 14001 environmental management system. ISO 14001 set out a framework to provide assurance that environmental impact was being measured and improved. Did WBC request evidence of ISO 14001 from potential suppliers and contractors? It was confirmed that ISO 14001 could be required depending on the type and size of contract under consideration.

Did the Council have an overarching policy relating to the Climate Emergency elements of the Procurement process? It was confirmed that a statement was included in the Corporate Strategy for Procurement.

What could the Council do to incentivise greater innovation from suppliers and contractors on Climate Emergency issues? It was confirmed that officers could explore greater incentivisation in the tendering process.

It was noted that a number of the CEAP KPIs relating to Procurement were currently showing a RAG status of Red. What was the Procurement team doing to improve these indicators? It was confirmed that officers were aware of the Red status and were confident that progress would be made in the next CEAP progress report in 2024.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Procurement officers report back to the Committee, within 6 months, with examples of success in embedding the Procurement actions in the CEAP;
- 2) Procurement officers provide a specific update on CEAP Action 8.1.1. – include a drafted approach to sustainable procurement within the review of the Procurement Strategy;
- 3) Procurement officers provide a general update on the remaining CEAP actions, including actions and timeframe to improve the targets with a Red RAG status;

- 4) officers investigate the impact and suitability of the Council adopting ISO 14001 to support the CEAP;
- 5) Procurement officers investigate measures to tighten up Procurement contracts and report back to the Committee;
- 6) Procurement officers seek to develop a specific overarching Procurement Climate Emergency policy to underpin the Procurement and Contract Management process;
- 7) the language in the report be strengthened so that the CEAP team “requires” action rather than “encourages” action.

24 BARKHAM SOLAR FARM UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in the Supplementary Agenda, which provided an update on the delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm.

David Smith (Development and Planning Manager – Commercial Property), and Ian Gough (Energy Manager) attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report stated that delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm had previously been progressing on the basis of a formal offer received from SSEN in April 2022 to connect to the grid by 2026. In April 2023, Wokingham Borough Council was advised by SSEN that connection to the Grid could not now be achieved until 2037. This was due to upgrades required at the transmission level before the project could connect to the grid. The design and survey work for the solar farm project was, therefore, put on hold pending the resolution of the connection issue.

In the interim period WBC had been engaging with both SSEN and National Grid in tripartite meetings to better understand the situation and seek positive and significant improvements to the connection date. These meetings had been at Chief Executive and Director level. The discussions were ongoing, but WBC had now received a verbal commitment that the connection date would now be more closely aligned with the original 2026 offer. It was likely that formal confirmation would be received in the next two weeks.

In light of the positive nature of the meetings with SSEN and National Grid, initial discussions with the Council’s contractor, Bouygues E&S, had commenced regarding remobilisation for the survey and design work. Bouygues E&S remained committed to the project and, mindful of the on-going discussions regarding the connection date, were keen to work with the WBC Project Team to devise a programme of remobilisation that best safeguarded the interests of the Council and the project delivery. Within the programme there was approximately 6-9 months of design and survey work to be undertaken before any construction work could begin. Updated costings for the solar farm project would be provided once the design and survey work was completed.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points and questions.

There was concern that the construction of the solar farm would take place alongside other significant construction projects in the area, such as the development of two new SEND schools, housing developments and works at the California crossroads. It was confirmed that coordination of these projects was essential and that a community liaison group would

be established to ensure that residents were aware of the various projects in the area and were able to provide input.

It was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be asked to consider the arrangements for future scrutiny of the Barkham Solar Farm, i.e. scrutiny to remain with this Committee or be shared with the other Scrutiny Committees.

It was suggested that contractors working on the construction projects in the area be asked to provide details of their plans for moving materials in and out of the area as part of the wider assessment of the impact on the local road network.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be asked to consider arrangements for future scrutiny of the Barkham Solar Farm project;
- 2) officers be asked to develop an overarching view of the impact of the solar farm and other construction projects in the area, involving local Members and the community liaison group;
- 3) the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the impact of the relevant construction and transport plans on the local area;
- 4) the relevant contractors be requested to share details of the plan/s for bringing materials to the relevant sites, taking into account the impact on the local road network and, in particular, information on the size of the vehicles that would be used and whether smaller than normal vehicles would be used;
- 5) the revised timeline for the Barkham Solar farm project be reported to the Committee as part of the regular update report.

25 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Committee considered its draft work programme for 2023/24, as set out at Agenda pages 21 to 23.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the draft work programme be noted;
- 2) the next meeting consider an update on the “ongoing” items in the Action Tracker report;
- 3) the Chair discuss potential future Agenda items with the Executive Member.

26 ACTION TRACKER

The Committee considered the regular Action Tracker report, as set out at Agenda pages 25 and 26.

RESOLVED: That the Action Tracker report be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

TITLE	Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 th December 2023.
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Engagement Officer, Climate Emergency – Resh Thorpe
DIRECTOR	Giorgio Framaliccio – Director of Place and Growth
LEAD MEMBER	Cllr Sarah Kerr – Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Residents Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Climate change poses a significant threat to our community. Increasing temperatures and more extreme weather events have negative consequences on every member of our community, and disproportionately affect those that are most socially vulnerable.

Effectively engaging with the community and changing behaviours through an Engagement and Communications Plan will make people feel empowered and invested in the climate issues that we face; consequently, seeing themselves as being part of the solution, not just part of the problem will help us to work towards achieving our target to become a Carbon Neutral Borough by 2030. This will also have positive implications on the economy, health and quality of life of our community.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes and provides comments on the September 2023 Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Background

In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) members unanimously declared a climate emergency. The declaration set out the commitment to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

Subsequently, WBC published its first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), establishing 10 key priority areas and over 100 actions to mitigate CO2 emissions and achieve this carbon neutral goal by 2030. The key priority areas are:

1. Transport
2. Renewable Energy Generation
3. Building Retrofitting
4. Carbon sequestration
5. Schools
6. Waste & Recycling
7. New Developments
8. Procurement
9. Engagement and Behaviour Change
10. Council Specific actions

WBC recognises it cannot reach this ambitious 2030 goal alone. Alongside the successful delivery of mitigation and adaptation projects, the success of the CEAP requires stakeholders including staff, residents, businesses, schools, Town and Parish Councils, WBC partners and community organisations to engage with the CEAP and minimise their carbon footprint by shifting to more sustainable behaviours.

Section 9 of the CEAP is about engagement and behaviour change, as per action 9.1.1 an Engagement & Communications Plan is needed to outline how WBC will effectively engage with the community and change behaviours in a positive way to make people feel empowered and invested in the climate issues that we face; consequently, seeing themselves as being part of the solution, not just part of the problem. This will aid delivery of the CEAP and help WBC to work towards achieving our Borough's dream to become a Carbon Neutral Borough by 2030.

Analysis

The aim of the Engagement & Communications Plan is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, and studies in Wokingham Borough understands our journey to a carbon neutral future, and is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to make their contribution to it; and to take ownership individually, as an organisation or as a community.

The Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan will sit alongside the CEAP and will be used as a guide to work with stakeholders and share ideas, and to collaborate on communication and engagement initiatives, in a positive and inclusive way. The success of the plan will be evaluated and reported against priority 9 of the CEAP. This plan will also help WBC to consider and develop actions, for inclusion in the CEAP, that will have the most impact in shifting behavioural change and lasting benefits for delivering our dream for a carbon neutral Borough by 2030.

Specifically, the Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan will aim to:

1. raise the profile of what we are doing as a Local Authority to reduce emissions against our ten CEAP priorities to help us achieve our carbon neutral target for 2030.
2. invite dialogue from our stakeholders and allow the community to constructively challenge our CEAP.
3. empower people to take action by supporting and incentivising residents, businesses and the wider community to make sustainable choices and pledges
4. prioritise engagement with under-represented groups who are likely to experience the more immediate effects of climate change.
5. collaborate with partners across the Borough and other local authorities to run communication and engagement initiatives across a wider area.

Next Steps

Alongside the evaluation methods outlined within the Plan, the Climate Emergency team will coordinate the delivery of the plan, working alongside officers from key departments. The team will report quarterly on progress on our engagement and communication against the relevant department service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In addition, we will come to the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny committee with an update against the Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan every six months, one of which will part of the annual scrutiny meeting of the CEAP progress report against Priority 9.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

WBC faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The cost implications are N/A as there is currently a WBC Climate Emergency Engagement officer in post within the Climate Emergency team who will be responsible for the development, co-ordination and evaluation of the actions set out in the Engagement and Communications Plan. Funding for this post expires in 2024/25, an MTFP growth bid has been put in to make this post permanent. We will collaboratively and creatively work in partnership with our stakeholders and actively look for sources of funding such as government grant schemes to fund and assist any actions within the delivery of this plan that require financial funding.

Cross-Council Implications

Addressing the climate emergency through the delivery of WBC's the Engagement & Communications Plan supports a range of Council priorities and areas of work included in WBC's CEAP. These include access to clean and green spaces, promotion of sustainable and active travel modes, provision of sustainable and quality homes, improving the health and quality of life of our community. Addressing the climate emergency requires commitment from all council departments.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Yes, Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken into account and an EDI form has been completed and is attached to this cover report. Climate changes affects every member of our community, particularly the most vulnerable people. Tackling the climate emergency, minimising emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change will have positive impacts on the health and quality of life of our residents.

List of Background Papers

Appendix A - Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan
Appendix B - EDI report– Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan

Contact: Resh Thorpe	Service: Place and Growth
Telephone No: 0780 9309485	Email Resh.Thorpe@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



September 2023



1. Introduction

In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) members unanimously declared a climate emergency. The declaration commits WBC to do as much as possible to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Subsequently, the council published its first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) in 2020.

The CEAP establishes 10 key priority areas and over 100 actions to mitigate CO₂ emissions and achieve this 2030 goal. The key priority areas are **Transport, Renewable Energy Generation, Building Retrofitting, Carbon Sequestration, Schools, Waste & Recycling, New Developments, Procurement, Engagement & Behaviour Change and Council Specific Actions**.

WBC recognises it cannot reach this ambitious 2030 goal alone. Alongside the successful delivery of mitigation and adaptation projects the success of the CEAP requires stakeholders including staff, residents, businesses, schools, Town and Parish Councils, partners and community organisations to engage with the CEAP and minimise their carbon footprint by shifting to more sustainable behaviours.

This engagement and communication plan will sit alongside the CEAP and will be used as a guide to work with stakeholders and share ideas, and to collaborate on communication and engagement initiatives, in a positive and inclusive way. This plan will also help us to consider and develop actions, for inclusion in the CEAP, that will have the most impact in shifting behavioural change and lasting benefits for delivering our dream for a carbon neutral Borough by 2030.

The Council faces increasing financial challenges. We will collaboratively and creatively work in partnership with our stakeholders and actively look for sources of funding such as government grant schemes to fund and assist the delivery of this plan.

2. Our dream for a Carbon Neutral Borough

In a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough, our community would breathe clean air and enjoy clean and green bio-diverse spaces. People would walk, wheel, scoot or cycle, use accessible public transport and low-emission vehicles. Homes, businesses, places of work and leisure would be low-carbon and energy efficient, powered by renewables and use innovative technologies that pave the way forward for future generations. Wokingham would be an inclusive and diverse community, where everyone plays their part in contributing towards a low-carbon future.

A dream for a carbon neutral Borough, developed following the “Dream session” of the 2022, Community Deliberative Process “Let’s Talk Climate”

3. Our Aim

Our aim is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, and studies in Wokingham Borough understands our journey to a carbon neutral future, and is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to make their contribution to it and to take ownership individually, as an organisation or as a community. More specifically, through this communication and engagement plan we aim:

1. To raise the profile of what we are doing as a Local Authority to reduce emissions against our ten CEAP priorities to help us achieve our carbon neutral dream for 2030.
2. To invite dialogue from our stakeholders and allow the community to constructively challenge our CEAP with our Executive and other public service providers through [The Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and to consider other mediums such as CEAP roadshow events within the Borough and interactive e-forums.

3. To empower people to take action by supporting and incentivising residents, businesses and the wider community to make sustainable choices and pledges, including by sharing advice and best-practice examples.
4. To prioritise engagement with under-represented groups who are likely to experience the more immediate effects of climate change and to ensure policies and projects from the CEAP bring about a just transition.
5. To collaborate with partners across the Borough and other local authorities to run communication and engagement initiatives across a wider area.

In our communications and engagement work, we will strive to:

- Remain positive, showing the added value and benefit of changing behaviour and how small steps collectively can lead to a big change.
- Have a clear message to take action in driving a change in the way we live, work and travel.
- Not use 'green guilt' or environmental 'shaming' to force people to change their habits.
- Allow people to feel part of the solution, not the problem and be inspired to act and make a change.
- Listen - building good relationships and trust within the community and allowing people to share their thoughts and ideas.
- Be accessible, inclusive and represent the diverse community of Wokingham Borough including minority groups.
- Inspire and encourage residents and the wider community to make behavioural changes and share these through our communication channels.

4. Key communication and engagement messages

- WBC has an ambitious action plan to tackle the climate emergency and reduce emissions.
- We can all do our bit – together as a community we can make change happen.
- The action we take now will benefit generations to come.
- We must reduce the impact of climate change, adapt to the impacts we are already experiencing, and support nature recovery.
- Reducing the Council's and Borough's emissions and carbon footprint has wider environmental, social, health, and economic benefits.

5. Communication Channels

An online presence will be the channel for most of our communications and engagement around our CEAP. This will be the hub for information about the things the Council is doing towards carbon neutrality.

We will develop a Climate Emergency area of the website to be a hub of practical information and resources for everyone. Within this area, we will have a public facing dashboard that outlines how we are doing, achievements, case studies and progress updates. We will use social media channels, the Council's monthly Climate Emergency newsletter and other relevant newsletters and internal communication channels to spread the message.

In addition, other non-online channels will be used to reach out to the community and hard to reach groups. We will conduct or participate in existing climate change events and campaigns in the community using libraries, schools and other community hubs to bring the community together, raise awareness of the CEAP and the Council's climate work, and empower them to take action locally.

6. Our Communication and Engagement Action Plan

To help achieve our Carbon Neutral dream by 2030, we will aspire to achieve the aims formulated from the Let's Talk Climate workshops for each of the stakeholder groups below and engage with them using the listed

actions. This is not an exhaustive list and will continue to grow as projects and initiatives progress within the CEAP from now until 2030.

Residents

Our aim – For every resident to understand how their lifestyle choices impact our Borough and to play their part in contributing towards a low-carbon future in the way they live, work and travel.

- Promote the Climate Emergency Action Plan on the Council’s website, newsletters, residents’ magazine and social media channels to raise awareness on the work we are doing and the progress we are making.
- Showcase council projects and celebrate success with reference to the climate emergency.
- Use the monthly Climate Emergency newsletter and other newsletters to publicise events and share information on small steps campaigns – e.g., No Mow May, eat less meat, reuse & recycle, sustainable period products, planet pledges.
- Encourage residents to inspire others by sharing their climate actions through case studies.
- Take part and run engagement events in the community e.g., Earth Fayre, Q & A sessions and library forums.
- Run awareness campaigns around the priority areas of the CEAP e.g., active travel, reducing waste, saving energy.
- Provide information and support to residents to encourage sustainable living e.g., retrofitting homes, renewable energy and greener travel.
- Promote networks and initiatives that support the sharing economy e.g., sustainable cafes, resource libraries, repair cafes, foodbanks, clothes swaps.
- Listen to residents to understand and identify what barriers exist to living sustainably and use champions and other networks to connect people together to working towards solutions.

Businesses and organisations

Our aim – For every business and organisation to understand how to operate sustainably.

- Support and engage with businesses by highlighting the financial savings that can be obtained by reducing their carbon emissions.
- Provide toolkits and advice for businesses to use to support them in reducing their carbon footprint.
- Develop business networks to share expertise and knowledge with other businesses, for example a sustainability charter.
- Contribute to the existing monthly business newsletter with case studies and showcase of sustainable businesses.
- Encourage businesses to appoint climate change or sustainability champions and work with them to engage their staff around the CEAP and Council’s climate work.

Education

Our aim – For every school to understand how to be resilient to the impacts of climate change and educate and inspire young people to live sustainable lives.

- Run and/or participate in COP annual events and Teacher Forums for schools’ engagement.
- Work with our Youth Council – to get young people linked together to share sustainable ideas to help their schools.
- Work with schools to raise awareness of the government’s [Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for Education](#) which sets out a new curriculum and will require all education settings to have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan by 2025.
- Create an eco-school’s initiative for sustainable schools.

- Provide work experience opportunities for students to learn about the work the Climate Emergency team and the Council do.
- Include articles and events on Climate Emergency within the education newsletter.

Wokingham Borough Council staff & partners

Our aim – Lead by example, champion the CEAP internally and in conversations with our partners

- Raise awareness of the CEAP through roadshow presentations within the Council for staff to understand how it embeds in each area of the organisation.
- Work with other Local Authorities and partners to share knowledge and identify successful campaigns and events.
- Collaboratively work with Town & Parish councils and partners to help engage communities around the Wokingham Borough's climate goal.
- Promote regular Climate Emergency updates using The Big Chat, Central Download newsletter and the intranet as part of an internal behavioural change program focused on reducing our carbon impact while working in the office and home.
- Continue to expand and give a voice to Net Zero Heroes – WBC's sustainability champions helping to support behavioural change within the organisation.
- Improve induction on CE for new staff by introducing a new e-learning module and develop a wider training programme for all staff.
- Promote staff volunteering opportunities that help reduce our carbon footprint and environmental impact e.g., litter picks, clean waterways etc.

7. Barriers and Challenges

There already exists a barrier for some to accept that climate change has been driven by human activities and that as a community we need to work together to avert the future risks associated with a changing climate. Additionally, people may not be clear about what causes climate change and may not currently consider climate change when making everyday decisions. This is not because they don't care, but because they do not understand the wider implications of their actions; from what they wear, eat, how they travel and power their homes.

A barrier to making effective change is that many of the actions that people can take to reduce their carbon footprint requires significant levels of investment. Whether it be changing how their premises or homes are heated to moving to electric vehicles, these big changes in lifestyle often require substantial financial outlay with long pay-back periods. Not everyone will be in a financial position to make these changes and as an authority we have a duty to communicate the small changes individuals can collectively make without huge associated costs.

It is also important to recognise that not everybody will want, or have the capacity, to be involved more deeply in climate action. The challenge is to understand what the drivers are to engage people in the climate change debate, to break down some of these barriers that exist and to connect people together to working towards solutions. How and what we communicate is key to driving societal change and not just by simply listing the facts. It is focussing on what matters to people as individuals and adapting our messaging accordingly through the listening process.

It is, therefore, important that the messaging for individual projects within the CEAP should recognise this too with the aim that all residents and businesses will have some level of engagement, either directly or indirectly, in the climate change agenda.

8. Evaluation of success

Communication and engagement evaluation is important for allowing us to understand if the actions we have delivered have had the desired impact within the community. We will aim to evaluate success of key actions by considering:

- **Reach and traffic** - how widely has our message been conveyed. e.g., data analysis from large campaigns, the number of subscribers to our Climate Emergency newsletter, website visits and clicks, social media engagement (likes and shares) event attendance and general enquiries (emails) from the community.
- **Engagement** - what sort of interaction has transpired as a result of our communications, was our message understood, what stakeholders did we target? Have we managed to engage our hard-to-reach groups? This may be through surveys, feedback questionnaires after events and workshops with particular stakeholder networks.
- **Lessons learned** – was our action and approach successful, what could we do differently next time?

We will through the CEAP communications monitoring group and with the communications lead officer continually look at different ways to monitor and evaluate our engagement and communications across the Borough. Additionally, we will use and analyse any data collected from previous campaigns, articles and events to inform our decision making for future engagement and communications.

By regular evaluation we hope to identify what actions of Climate Emergency members of our community are engaged in, what they are most interested in and what their concerns are. This will help us to better understand what future actions are needed and how we can provide meaningful support and services to them to work towards carbon neutrality.

9. Reporting on progress

By working in the open, we will communicate WBC's commitment for a carbon neutral Borough by 2030 and honestly report the actions we are taking and progress against these. We will in addition publish an annual progress update within the annual CEAP progress report against Priority 9.

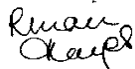
To meet carbon neutrality by 2030 we need rapid, far-reaching change across our Borough. Working at pace, in an area where policy, research and technology are constantly evolving will mean there are things we try that do not work. We will share these challenges and lessons learnt, whilst celebrating our successes, to maintain an open dialogue with our community and partners and support a collective, Borough-wide response to the climate and ecological crisis.

Effectively engaging with the community and changing behaviours in a positive way will make people feel empowered and invested in the climate issues that we face; consequently, seeing themselves as being part of the solution, not just part of the problem will help us to work towards achieving our dream to become a Carbon Neutral Borough by 2030.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Progress Report

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

EqIA Titular information:

Date:	22/08/2023
Service:	Economy and Housing
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	The Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications Plan
Completed by:	Resh Thorpe
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	No
Signed off by:	Rhian Hayes, Assistant Director Economy & Housing 
Sign off date:	13/11/2023

23

1. Policy, Project or service information:

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:
<p>In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council members unanimously declared a climate emergency. The declaration set out the commitment to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon neutral borough by 2030.</p> <p>Subsequently, the council published its first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), establishing 10 key priority areas and over 100 actions to mitigate CO2 emissions and achieve this 2030WBC's aim is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, and studies in Wokingham Borough understands our journey to a carbon neutral future, and is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to make their contribution to it and to take ownership individually, as an organisation or as a community and the plan will outline the actions the council will take to address this.</p>

WBC recognises it cannot reach this ambitious 2030 goal alone. Alongside the successful delivery of mitigation and adaptation projects the success of the CEAP requires stakeholders including staff, residents, businesses, schools, Town and Parish Councils, partners and community organisations to engage with the CEAP and minimise their carbon footprint by shifting to more sustainable behaviours.

The Climate Emergency Engagement and Communication Plan will sit alongside the Climate Emergency Action Plan and will be used as a guide to work with stakeholders and share ideas, and to collaborate on communication and engagement initiatives, in a positive and inclusive way. This will be evaluated and reported against priority 9 of the CEAP. This plan will also help us to consider and develop actions, for inclusion in the CEAP, that will have the most impact in shifting behavioural change and lasting benefits for delivering our dream for a carbon neutral Borough by 2030.

Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:

The Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Team lead on the implementation and update of the CEAP, with cooperation from multiple departments across the council in delivering the actions. The Climate Emergency Engagement & Communications will be a working document update, monitored and evaluated by the Climate Emergency Engagement Officer within the team.

Communication and engagement evaluation is important for allowing us to understand if the actions we have delivered have had the desired impact within the community and our stakeholders. We will aim to evaluate success of our communications and engagement actions by considering:

- **Reach and traffic** - how widely has our message been conveyed.
- **Engagement** - what sort of interaction has transpired as a result of our communications, was our message understood, what stakeholders did we target? Have we managed to engage our hard-to-reach groups?
- **Lessons learned** – was our action and approach successful, what could we do differently next time?

Alongside the evaluation methods outlined above, we will report quarterly progress on our engagement and communications plan against the relevant department service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to directors. Progress will be monitored within the communications monitoring group of the CEAP and its Lead Officer to ensure best practice is also being adopted.

In addition, progress on the Climate Engagement Plan will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee every six months for review.

Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?

The main beneficiaries of the project are all of the residents and businesses and stakeholders of Wokingham Borough. By delivering this plan and effectively engaging with the community and changing behaviours in a positive way. Our community will feel empowered and invested in the climate issues that we face; consequently, seeing themselves as being part of the solution, not just part of the problem and will help us to work towards achieving our dream to become a Carbon Neutral Borough by 2030.

Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:

WBC's aim is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, and studies in Wokingham Borough understands our journey to a carbon neutral future, and is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to make their contribution to it and to take ownership individually, as an organisation or as a community and the plan will outline the actions the council will take to address this.

The Climate Emergency communication and engagement plan will aim to:

1. raise the profile of what we are doing as a Local Authority to reduce emissions against our ten CEAP priorities to help us achieve our carbon neutral dream for 2030.
2. invite dialogue from our stakeholders and allow the community to constructively challenge our CEAP.
3. empower people to take action by supporting and incentivising residents, businesses and the wider community to make sustainable choices and pledges
4. prioritise engagement with under-represented groups who are likely to experience the more immediate effects of climate change.
5. collaborate with partners across the Borough and other local authorities to run communication and engagement initiatives across a wider area.

2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation

- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.

3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.

26

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this. Our translator provider can also help our translation provider could mitigate any negative impact of the comms only being in one language.
Gender:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.
Disabilities:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this. Our Climate Emergency Action Plan is an accessible document and is available in easy read. Some of our events will be specifically delivered to disability groups such as CLASP to ensure a wider awareness of Climate Emergency. All of the venues that we will run events at will be accessible.
Age:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this. Some of our events and communications will also be targeted specifically for younger people and schools to ensure engagement of all ages.

Sexual orientation:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.
Religion/belief:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.
Gender re-assignment:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.
Marriage and civil partnership:	Positive	All of the residents and businesses of Wokingham Borough will be equally and positively impacted by delivering this engagement & communication plan as it demonstrates to the community WBC's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and how we need to work together to achieve this.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low of high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

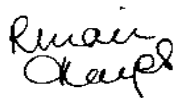
Initial impact assessment approved by:

Date:

Rhian Hayes,

13/11/2023

Assistant Director, Economy & Housing



This page is intentionally left blank

TITLE	Barkham Solar Farm Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 December 2023
WARD	Barkham
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm is identified as a key priority of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The project will also generate a considerable net income for the Council over 25 years which will be introduced into the Council's annual budget using an equalisation reserve.

RECOMMENDATION

To note the update on progress on the delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

In March of this year, SSEN advised that the connection date for the Barkham Solar Farm had been pushed out from 2026 to 2037.

Following ongoing negotiations, WBC are now in receipt of a written revised connection offer from SSEN for August 2026 connection. At the time of writing the Council's Project and Legal teams are in the process of considering the offer and seeking further clarifications. More detail will be reported on the evening of the O&S Committee. This new connection offer represents a significant and positive step in the delivery of the project.

Bouygues E&S (the Council's contractor) have remobilised and over the next couple of months will complete their survey work and progress the design ready for discharging the planning conditions.

Following the above, the business case for the solar farm will be updated and reported back into the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2024.

Background

In March of this year, SSEN advised that the connection date for the Barkham Solar Farm had been pushed out from 2026 to 2037.

This current update follows on from the update provided at the previous Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2023. At that time it was advised that following positive engagement with SSEN and National Grid, WBC were awaiting a formal revised connection date/offer from SSEN more closely aligned with the original connection offer of 2026. O&S Committee were also advised that in light of the positive nature of the tripartite meetings between WBC, SSEN and National Grid, Bouygues E&S (the Council's contractor) were being remobilised to complete the surveying, design and contract pricing under their Pre-Construction Services Agreement.

Grid Connection Update

Since that last update further meetings and correspondence has occurred between WBC, SSEN and National Grid; culminating in WBC receiving a written revised connection offer letter from SSEN for August 2026 connection.

At the time of writing, the Council's Project and Legal teams are in the process of considering the offer and seeking further clarifications. More detail will be reported on the evening of the O&S Committee. This new connection offer represents a significant and positive step in the delivery of the project.

Bouygues' Remobilisation

Following remobilisation, Bouygues E&S commenced their survey work on 28th November 2023. Over the next couple of months they will complete their survey work and progress the design sufficiently to enable submission of details to the Local Planning Authority for approval under the various pre-commencement conditions imposed against the planning permission. These submissions to the Local Planning Authority are anticipated in February/March 2024.

Future Reporting

The financial business case for the Barkham Solar Farm was previously presented to, and supported by, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 5th October 2022.

The business case will be updated cognisant of the new SSEN Grid Connection Offer together with Bouygues' design progression and known changes to the market in terms of costs and values. Both the design progression and updated business case will be presented into Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2024 (currently diarised for 29th February); followed by update reporting into Executive in March 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£26.8m	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
Following receipt of the revised connection offer from SSEN and Bouygues' design progression, the business case will be updated, the delivery programme can be formalised and future spend will be profiled.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
The net income from the Solar Farm will be introduced into the Council's annual budget using an equalisation reserve.

Public Sector Equality Duty
An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The Initial Impact Assessment did not identify any potentially negative impacts upon persons with protected characteristics.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030
Generation of renewable energy through investment in solar farms is identified as a key priority under the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). The delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm is a specific target identified therein.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
None

Contact David Smith	Service Commercial Property
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6230	Email david.smith2@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CLIMATE EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
9 January 2024	CEAP Progress Report	To consider progress against one or more of the CEAP key priority areas for carbon reduction	Committee Request	Rhian Hayes
	Solar Farms	To consider progress relating to the development of solar farms in the Borough in line with the CEAP	Standing Item	David Smith
	Work Programme	To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24 – to be informed by CEAP updates	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Action Tracker	To consider the regular Action Tracker report	Standing Item	Neil Carr

33

Agenda Item 35

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
29 February 2024	CEAP Progress Report	To consider progress against one or more of the CEAP key priority areas for carbon reduction	Committee Request	Rhian Hayes
	Local Plan Update	To scrutinise the sections of the Local Plan Update which impact on the Climate Emergency Action Plan	Committee Request	Ian Bellinger
	Procurement Update	To consider progress against the Committee's recommendations at the meeting on 25 September 2023	Committee Request	Procurement
	Solar Farms	To consider progress relating to the development of solar farms in the Borough in line with the CEAP	Standing Item	David Smith
	Work Programme	To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24 – to be informed by CEAP updates	Standing Item	Neil Carr
	Action Tracker	To consider the regular Action Tracker report	Standing Item	Neil Carr

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – Action Tracker 2023/24

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – 4 January 2023		
Agenda Item	Action	Update
Climate Emergency Position Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential topics for future meetings – include in work programme • Written answer re outsourced services being environmentally friendly; • Discussion with Chair about Agenda for next meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed • Completed

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – 14 March 2023		
Agenda Item	Action	Update
Carbon Savings from Waste Collection Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate additional info in response to Member questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
Barkham Solar Farm Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further updates to the Committee in due course • Officers to ensure that lobbying on this issue is coordinated – including local MPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed
Solar Farms Delivery within CEAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further updates as part of the annual CEAP update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
Climate Emergency Deliberative Process Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify actual costs and description of the deliberative process in the MTFP • Include Vision for a net zero Borough in the CEAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – 23 May 2023		
Agenda Item	Action	Update
Task & Finish Group Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging Climate Emergency Business Strategy be submitted to a future meeting • Officers to lobby Government over “green skills” shortages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • Completed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee supports an independent carbon audit of the CEAP – refer to Audit Committee • Congratulations to officers on progress against the Task & Finish Group recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed
CEAP and the LPU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further report on emerging policy direction and links between LPU and CEAP • Member briefing/training on the LPU and importance of embedding CEAP Into LPU • Officers seek to include provisions in LPU re the delivery of high speed broadband • Officers continue discussions with EA on “downstream” measures aimed at reducing risk of flooding • Congratulations to officers on progress in embedding CE measures into LPU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update report on LPU early 2024 • Completed
CEAP Traffic Reduction Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress noted – further update reports in due course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – 11 July 2023

Agenda Item	Action	Update
CEAP Fourth Progress Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments and feedback from the Committee to be used to modify the CEAP prior to submission to Council in September • Officers congratulated on revisions to CEAP layout and content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed
Work Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Agenda item on solar farms progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed

Climate Emergency O&S Committee – 25 September 2023

Agenda Item	Action	Update
Procurement Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement officers report back to the Committee, within 6 months, with examples of success in embedding the Procurement actions in the CEAP; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing - report back to Feb 2024 meeting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement officers to provide update on CEAP Action 8.1.1. – include a drafted approach to sustainable procurement within the review of the Procurement Strategy; • Procurement officers provide update on the remaining CEAP actions, including actions and timeframe to improve the targets with a Red RAG status; • Officers investigate the impact and suitability of the Council adopting ISO 14001 to support the CEAP; • Procurement officers investigate measures to tighten up Procurement contracts and report back to the Committee; • Procurement officers seek to develop a specific overarching Procurement Climate Emergency policy to underpin the Procurement and Contract Management process; • Language in the report be strengthened so that the CEAP team “requires” action rather than “encourages” action. 	
Barkham Solar Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&S Management Committee be asked to consider arrangements for future scrutiny of the Barkham Solar Farm project; • Officers be asked to develop an overarching view of the impact of the solar farm and other construction projects in the area, involving local Members and the community liaison group; • Community and Corporate O&S Committee be requested to scrutinise the impact of the relevant construction and transport plans on the local area; • Relevant contractors be requested to share details of the plan/s for bringing materials to the relevant sites, taking into account the impact on the local road network; • Revised timeline for the Barkham Solar farm project be reported to the Committee as part of the regular update report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Ongoing • Ongoing • Ongoing • Ongoing
Work Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Agenda item on Barkham and other solar farms progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed

This page is intentionally left blank