

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Community Deliberative Process for the Climate Emergency Proposal</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Thursday, 28 October 2021
<b>WARD</b>	None specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions - Gregor Murray

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

The purpose of this report is to gain approval from the Executive to deliver a Community Deliberative Process for Climate Emergency as described in the proposal (Appendix A.) and to approve the funding required to deliver this process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Executive:

- 1) approve the proposal to deliver a Community Deliberative Process for the Climate Emergency through deliberative peer groups and e-panels to engage the community with the Council's response to climate change;
- 2) approve £46,000 to fund the delivery of Community Deliberative Process for the Climate Emergency as described in the proposal (Appendix A);
- 3) note the key objectives and outcomes of the process for wider engagement with the community to empower stakeholders including but not limited to, Wokingham borough residents, young people, community groups and the business community to play as full a role as possible in achieving a net-zero carbon borough by 2030;
- 4) note that outcomes and recommendations from the process will be taken to Council next year with the commitment that their feasibility will be explored by officers. Officers will report back to Council to inform which recommendations will be incorporated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan to support further action.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 the Executive approved the recommendation to engage the community with the climate emergency through a community deliberative process.

Following this decision and based on the extensive review undertaken of deliberative engagement processes on climate emergency, the proposal to engage the community through deliberative peer groups and e-panels was developed (Appendix A). The proposal has been developed based on consultation with experts in the social research and community engagement fields.

The Community Deliberative Process will engage key stakeholders and a wide range of residents in discussions around the climate emergency and put forward recommendations to overcome our biggest challenges as a Council in achieving net zero carbon.

The key objectives of this process are:

- To empower residents, businesses, local organisations, schools and stakeholders to be part of the Borough's net-zero carbon 2030 vision.
- To support and improve the Council's response to the climate emergency by engaging the community and encouraging greater participation in the actions.
- To develop a greater understanding of the community's priorities in tackling the climate emergency that will inform decision making.
- To identify the key drivers and motivations for each audience so that our actions can be tailored to deliver improvements in these areas and encourage behavioural change.
- To generate recommendations for actions to achieve net zero carbon.
- To create a network of climate champions who will share learning and best practice.

Outcomes and recommendations from the process will be taken to Council to inform future decision-making and may be incorporated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan to help make Wokingham Borough net zero carbon by 2030 and address climate change, whilst improving the quality of life for all residents.

## BACKGROUND

Tackling the climate emergency and addressing the levels of human derived carbon dioxide emissions is a national and international priority. In 2015, 191 parties of the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change have committed to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius or well below 2 degrees by the end of this century in the first ever legally binding global climate change agreement. Since then, the UK Government has committed to be reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050 by law, in the Climate Change Act (2008).

Wokingham Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and with it, committed to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon-neutral borough by 2030. The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was adopted in January 2020 followed by detailed annual progress reports approved at Council in July 2020 and July 2021. As part of the CEAP, the Council also committed to communicate and engage with residents and other stakeholders to work together to initiate education programmes and encourage behaviour change.

Community deliberative processes have been used by many local authorities and the UK government to discuss various issues including how to tackle the climate emergency. Policy decisions made to this end impact almost every policy area as well as the operational working of a governmental authority at any level. Due to the scale of the challenge, whichever combination of policy decisions are made, impacts the way every resident lives their lives and how every business and community group operates.

In April 2021, an extensive review of climate emergency community deliberative processes was carried out by the Council's climate emergency team. The Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes Options Appraisal Report was approved by Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 with the commitment to present a proposal to Executive in October to establish the financial implications, timelines and expected outcomes from this process.

The Options Appraisal analysed fifteen varied options for community deliberation and scored these against factors which are of local importance to Wokingham Borough's particular challenges faced in tackling the climate emergency. The report incorporated information gathered from industry experts and case studies from other local authority's experiences in this field. Following this review, two methods of engagement were highly recommended: focus groups and e-panels.

To build on the results from the Options Appraisal and develop the proposal, further consultation with experts in the social research, public consultation and community engagement fields including APSE, the Consultation Institute, and Involve Community took place over the last few months. These organisations endorsed the process, giving constructive feedback which has been incorporated into the proposal set out below.

This proposal recommends the use of deliberative peer groups and e-panels to engage the community with the Council's response to climate change. The proposal explains how these methods will be incorporated into Wokingham Borough Council community deliberative process for the climate emergency.

## **Community Deliberative Processes Proposal**

### **Deliberative peer groups**

These are similar to focus groups in bringing sectors/audiences together, who will share similar experiences, challenges and motivations in tackling climate change. However, they differ in format and design as the groups will meet multiple times and will involve greater input and deliberation from them than is usually expected from a focus group. This option provides a level-playing field for ideas, greater opportunities for detailed discussion, a controlled space where all participants can contribute, bounce ideas off each other and generate new unique solutions to issues which the council may not have considered previously. Such high detail qualitative data is particularly useful to fully understand the motivations behind behaviours, what influences decisions and some of the barriers which may be preventing adoption of measures.

### **E-panels**

In addition, the proposal includes the use of e-panels, to allow a wider group of residents the opportunity to be part of the deliberative process. Residents will be able to feedback on the recommendations made by the peer groups and grade them based on how effective they believe the recommendations will be in tackling the challenges at hand. This option is easy to use both for the council in terms of analysis and for residents to complete, being all done online. Enabling residents to input their ideas and feel included in the process, will increase their engagement with the climate emergency action plan and strengthen the commitment to become a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

By combining deliberative peer groups with e-panels, the council aims to verify the recommendations garnered from the peer groups within a wider audience. This will provide high quality feedback from the deliberation process and wider engagement with our community.

### **Project Delivery**

There will be several parties, elements and stages to this extensive community engagement process.

There will be approximately 9 deliberative peer groups which are expected to be:

- Young People (Primary School age) & Parents
- Young People (Secondary School age)
- Teachers
- Residents (a representative and inclusive cohort including BAME residents)
- Voluntary Sector & Community Organisations
- Businesses
- Councillors
- Town & Parish Council Clerks
- Council Officers

Each group will be made up of around 10 participants. There will be exceptions to this limit on participants where necessary and is subject to change depending on the needs of the group and expert advice from facilitators.

As these are key stakeholder groups, those who agree to participate in these peer groups are likely to have a grounding knowledge or interest of or in the climate emergency. However, this does not mean participants will have the same views, level of knowledge or belief in climate change.

The recommendations from this deliberative peer group exercise will be collated and put to the residents E-panel. This is a wider ranging group of people who will be able to access these recommendations and grade them online before the report of the process is written up and recommendations are taken to Council to inform decision making.

The process will also include a Steering Group of experts in fields related to sustainability who will meet with the facilitators to act as a sounding board and critical friend to the process. The process will be overseen by the Oversight Panel to ensure the process is being followed and the aims and objectives are being met. Both of these groups will be consulted at the start and towards the end of the community deliberative process.

Facilitation services for all meetings are to be provided by a professional, independent organisation. This will have an associated cost as they will have expertise in community deliberation and consultation. The facilitation team should be external to the Council to ensure impartiality. This role should be carried out by experienced practitioners who can ensure that the deliberation environment is respectful.

The process will generate recommendations that will be taken to Council with the commitment that their feasibility will be explored by officers. Officers will report back to Council to inform which recommendations will be incorporated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan to support further action in Wokingham Borough to become a net zero carbon borough by 2030 and address climate change, whilst improving the quality of life for all residents.

## **Finance**

The cost implications for the process as described in Part B include engaging skilled facilitators with experience in planning the discussion guides, selection and recruitment of relevant and diverse participants and supporting the delivery of the focus groups. Some costs may also arise from producing marketing materials, administrative capabilities and potential use of venues if the events are hosted publicly.

There is an assumption that participants will be volunteers, a scenario that is not unlikely due to the level of interest in this topic within the community. However, incentives have been considered in the cost of the process.

Internally, it will require significant staff time in preparation, support, delivery, and analysis of data. Some of these engagement methods are expected to be more resource-intensive than others and will require the support of multiple teams within the Council.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources 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)	£46,000	No	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	N/A	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	N/A	

<b>Other Financial Information</b>
None

<b>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</b>
Stakeholder consultation will continue as we refine the process during the project planning stage. The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a council-wide project that requires all council services, investments and delivery projects to review and prioritise reducing carbon dioxide emissions where possible.

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
An Equalities Impact Assessment report has been completed and included as an Appendix to this proposal.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>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</i></b>
The community deliberative process for the climate emergency will inform the Council in its future decision making around the climate emergency agenda through wide and extensive engagement with all key stakeholders and much of the wider community. The outcomes of this process will mean a more robust action plan to meet the commitment to become a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
This is commercially sensitive because there will be a tendering process to support the project.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Appendix A. Proposal Community Deliberative Process for Climate Emergency Appendix B. EqIA Community Deliberative Process Part 2. Project Cost Description

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