

Community Deliberative Process for Climate Change

• Introduction

Wokingham Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, committing to becoming a net zero carbon borough by 2030. The council's Climate Emergency Action Plan to 2030 sets out the targets to be met and actions to be taken in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions but this cannot be achieved by the council alone. Wide and holistic engagement is needed with the stakeholders and communities in Wokingham Borough in order to make the borough net zero carbon within this ambitious timescale.

To increase active engagement with the Climate Emergency agenda the council is putting forward a proposal to host a community deliberative process for climate change. This 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.

Outcomes and recommendations from the community deliberative process 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.

This document outlines the aims and outcomes of the community deliberative process, which parties will be involved, how the process will work as well as how it will feed back into the climate emergency action plan. Please note that this process is subject to change slightly based on further expert advice from the external facilitators once they are on board.

• Aims and Outcomes

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.

• Background

In July 2021 the Executive approved the recommendation to engage the community with the climate emergency through a community deliberative process, following extensive research carried out to identify and assess different public deliberative methods. The research included the review of fifteen community engagement and deliberation methods, case studies from other local authorities engaging their residents with the climate emergency agenda and assessment of each method against evaluation

criteria. The criteria included cost, length of the process, number of participants, feedback detail, discussion potential, participant variation, and communication of results.

The proposal to engage the community through deliberative peer groups and e-panels was developed based on this extensive review and consultation with experts in the social research, public consultation and community engagement fields including APSE, the Consultation Institute, and Involve Community. These organisations endorsed the process, giving constructive feedback which has been incorporated into this proposal.

- **Elements of the Community Deliberative Processes**

Deliberative peer groups

These are similar to focus groups in bringing sectors/audiences together, who may 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

E-panels have been chosen because they 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 online and user-friendly, making it accessible to most residents as well as providing quantitative data analysis for the council. 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.

Participants

Local members of the community will come together to discuss the evidence and topic in order to make recommendations. All participants will be asked to rate how important they believe climate change is before participation in the process to ensure the council has a clear understanding of the bias behind the discussions and any outcomes. Likewise, demographic information will be gathered from participants to understand the level of inclusivity in the process.

Community participation will be carried out via two different methods:

- 1) Deliberative peer groups: will share knowledge and have honest discussions among their peers as to how these challenges impact their particular sector of the wider Wokingham Borough community.

In order to gain a wide and inclusive scope of consultation, discussion and deliberation we anticipate having approximately 9 peer groups and 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. Identified groups 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 (both borough and town and parish councillors)
- Town & Parish Council Clerks
- Council Officers

The council recognises that those who agree to participate in these peer groups are likely to have a grounding knowledge or interest of or in the climate emergency. Although the peer groups will be made up of people from specific stakeholders or sectors in the community, it does not mean they have the same views, level of knowledge or belief in climate change.

- 2) E-panel: participants will be recruited virtually through our own channels, ensuring that a wider audience can participate in the process, have a say on the recommendations made by the peer groups, and rank them by importance and effect.

Coordination team

The coordination team will be made up of officers within Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Emergency and Communication, Engagement and Marketing teams. The Coordination team will appoint the Facilitation team.

Facilitation team

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

Facilitators will run each of the deliberative peer group sessions during the community deliberative process as well as the steering group and oversight panel meetings. The role of the facilitation team is to ensure that the deliberation is not dominated by one or a few people and that everyone has a chance to speak. The team should be sufficiently large to adequately support the number of participants and associated deliberative discussions. The facilitators will not have the opportunity to voice their own opinion but will ensure the entire process is balanced and robust and that the principles of community deliberation are followed.

The Facilitation team gather information and recommendations from each deliberative peer group discussion for feedback into the process.

Steering Group

The Steering Group for the community deliberative process will be a group made up of experts in sustainability industries. Those willing to volunteer their time to take part will meet twice, once at the start and once towards the end of the process.

The purpose of the group will be to:

- Give a steer to the direction of deliberative discussion and ideal outcomes via the facilitation team.
- Assess the quality of content of evidence presented to the deliberative peer groups to ensure they are robust and suitable.
- Be a critical friend to the process.

Oversight Panel

This group monitors the entire process and the other bodies in order to make sure that the community deliberative process is balanced and robust and that the principles of its design are followed.

Stages of the Community Deliberative Process

- a) Evidence videos are produced with experts
- b) Oversight Panel Consulted
- c) Steering Group – First Meeting
- d) Deliberative Peer Groups round 1: Learning phase
- e) Deliberative Peer Groups round 2: Deliberative phase
- f) Recommendations put to E-panel for ranking
- g) Report stage
- h) Steering group – Second Meeting
- i) Oversight Panel Consulted
- j) Outcomes and Recommendations Report to Council
- k) Final report shared publicly

• How the process will work

The deliberation process is planned to start engaging with participants in February 2022, following a 3-month lead time from November 2021 to appoint the facilitator, draft Terms of Reference for all groups, invite participants and arrange all venues as well as produce the evidence videos needed. The Terms of Reference documents will set out the scope, expected outcomes of the process, how discussions and/or recommendations will be used by Wokingham Borough Council and associated timelines. Careful consideration will be required to ensure participants understand the full context of Local Authority decision making and influence. Discussion topics will be decided during this lead-in time through internal consultation with officers involved in delivering the climate emergency agenda across the council's services, to identify gaps in the action plan and in the council's knowledge of community engagement in the climate emergency.

- a) Evidence videos are produced with experts

Evidence videos will be produced before the process begins to give accurate background information on the challenges and inform the discussion. The coordination team or the facilitation team will work with experts from the local area to produce evidence videos.

- b) Oversight Panel Consulted

This group are consulted to review the progress made, ensuring all elements of the community deliberative process are balanced and robust and clarify the principles of the design of the process to be followed during the next stage of the process where the peer deliberative groups will meet.

c) Steering Group – First Meeting

The purpose of this meeting will be to inform and advise the process. The Facilitation team will chair this meeting and will use the steer from the discussion when running the deliberative peer groups.

d) Deliberative Peer Groups – Round 1: Learning phase

The first round of Deliberative Peer Group meetings will be a learning phase with each of the approximate 9 groups meeting once.

- i. Attendants are presented with evidence in the form of videos
- ii. Discussion based on the evidence

e) Deliberative Peer Groups – Round 2: Deliberative phase

There will be a gap of at least a week between meetings to allow for the group to deliberate, research further and reflect on the evidence witnessed and immediate discussions during the first meeting. The approximate timescale of the deliberative peer group process is therefore 3 months.

- i. Deliberative discussion where attendants reflect on the previous meeting and share any reflections from between meetings
- ii. Recommendations formed by the group with help of the facilitators

f) Recommendations put to E-panel for ranking

Recommendations will then be put to an E-panel for enough time to allow for sufficient levels of participation. This will allow a wider group of residents the opportunity to grade the recommendations based on how effective they believe the recommendations will be in tackling the challenges at hand and give feedback.

g) Report stage

The outcomes of the process will be brought into a report.

h) Steering group – Second Meeting

This report will then be presented to the steering group as a sounding board opportunity for expert analysis of these final recommendations.

i) Oversight Panel – Second Meeting

The Oversight Panel will meet for a second time towards the end of the process to provide oversight of the deliberation at this stage and ensure the principles of the design of the process have been followed and objectives fulfilled.

j) Outcomes and Recommendations Report to Council

The final recommendations will then be taken to council where decisions will be made as to how these recommendations will be used or implemented.

k) Final report shared publicly

Outcomes of the process will be shared with participants of the process including how recommendations will be used to complete the feedback loop.

Impact of recommendations

Recommendations will be used to inform future decision making in the climate emergency agenda. These may be incorporated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan, where appropriate and feasible.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a live document where actions and targets are updated annually. Internal consultation will be needed to determine the feasibility, cost and carbon emission savings of recommendations.

Outcomes and recommendations from the community deliberative process 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.

- **Proposed Project Timeline**

	Target Date	Duration
Appoint Facilitation Team	Nov 2021	1 month
Produce Evidence Videos	Nov 2021 – Jan 2022	3 months
Draft Terms of Reference for all groups, invite all participants & arrange meetings	Dec 2021 – Jan 2022	2 months
Initial meetings/consultation: - Oversight Panel - Steering Group	Feb 2022	2 days
Host deliberative peer groups	Feb – April 2022	3 months
Recommendation consolidation	May 2022	3 weeks
E-panel	May – June 2022	1 month
Second meetings/consultation: - Oversight Panel - Steering Group	June 2022	2 days
Final Report Writing	July 2022	1 month
Outcomes and Recommendations Report to Full Council Meeting	July – Sept 2022	3 months
Officer’s Report back to Council after feasibility & scoping work to incorporate new actions into the CEAP	October – December 2022	3 months
Feedback circulated to participants	Sept 2022	2 weeks

** These are estimated dates and subject to change*

- **Project Cost and resources**

The cost implications for the process 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 in person.

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, the delivery of this project 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.