

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

4 March 2020

Task Group and Programme Boards Representatives Updates

Purpose

To provide an update on recent task group and programme board activity and propose any decisions requiring Committee approval.

1. Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group

Membership:

Cllr Clare Cape
Cllr Tony Deane
Cllr Sarah Gibson
Cllr Tony Jackson
Cllr Jacqui Lay
Cllr Brian Mathew
Cllr Nick Murry
Cllr Fred Westmoreland
Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

Terms of Reference:

1. Develop recommendations and a plan seek to achieve the target of making the county of Wiltshire, excluding the area administered by Swindon Borough Council, net carbon neutral by 2030;
2. The task group's work will include, but not be limited to, performing investigations into the following areas:
 - a) Renewable Energy generation, energy use and efficiency
 - b) Planning
 - c) Transport & Air Quality
 - d) Waste
 - e) Land Use
 - f) Business & Industry
3. Undertake a carbon/renewables audit;
4. Agree parameters with the relevant Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder that represent the council impact on the climate that can be accurately reported to council on a regular basis.

Recent activity:

A list of the Task Group’s activities since the last Committee meeting is included below, along with its forward work programme.

The Task Group continues to gather evidence under each of its workstreams and intends to bring formal recommendations to Committee for endorsement in May and/or June. These are likely to address the following topics:

- **The council’s Local Plan:** This is currently being revised, including through a councillor-officer focus group specifically looking at its climate change impacts, which the lead task group members attend. The task group are looking at the potential for planning policies that are structured around carbon reduction targets; the introduction of ‘carbon levies’ on developers (sometimes known as ‘allowable solutions’); and planning policies that drive the development of sustainable, connected communities.
- **The council’s Local Transport Plan:** This is the council’s high-level strategic plan for transport and its fourth version is now being developed. Task group members will be involved in workshops to help shape this and will explore recommendations around encouraging sustainable transport solutions.
- **Community Energy:** Following an information gathering meeting with four local community energy organisations, the task group are considering recommendations that the council uses and supports community energy more, potentially through partnership working, provision of council land or assets and contingent financial support.
- **Council developments:** The council plans to build 1000 new homes through its HRA account over the next 10 years. The council’s wholly-owned housing development company, Stone Circle, also has an agreed business plan for the coming year. The task group is considering the proposed energy efficiency standards of both, taking into account the impact on unit numbers of raising these to reduce their carbon impact.

18 November 2019	Energy Discussion of the proposed energy efficiency standards of council developments and its programme to improve private housing’s energy efficiency.
2 December 2019	Full Task Group meeting
3 December 2019	Planning Local Plan Climate Change Focus Group – Session #1.
5 December 2019	Business and Industry

	Meeting with Swindon & Wiltshire LEP to discuss the its industrial and local energy strategies.
20 January 2020	Full Task Group meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation from Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on Local Energy
20 January 2020	Transport Meeting with the council's Head of Passenger Transport, to discuss opportunities for bus travel to reduce the county's carbon emissions.
23 January 2020	General Meeting with the council's Head of Wiltshire Pension Fund, to discuss the Wiltshire Pension Fund's investment behaviour in terms of fossil fuels (Member Briefing Note available here).
29 January 2020	Planning and energy Meeting with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to discuss a variety of areas, including planning policies that drive sustainable development.
6 February 2020	Planning and energy Meeting to discuss Community Energy initiatives with, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath & West Community Energy • Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy • Salisbury Community Energy • Zero Chippenham
10 February 2020	Energy Recap regarding the proposed energy efficiency standards of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Council housing new builds b) Council housing maintenance / retrofit programme c) Stone Circle (council wholly-owned development company) housing developments.

Forward Work Programme

TBC March / April 2020	Energy Meeting with two Renewable Energy developers to consider their analysis of opportunities in Wiltshire.
2 March 2020	Full Task Group meeting
10 March 2020	Transport and Energy

	Meeting with Electric Vehicle businesses to consider barriers and opportunities to increasing EV use in Wiltshire.
2 April 2020	Planning Session #2 of climate change councillor/officer focus group on the Local Plan .
Spring 2020	Transport Task Group members involved in workshops to develop the Local Transport Plan 4 .
Spring 2020	Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further meeting to consider the draft Housing Renewal Strategy (to improve the energy efficiency of the county's private housing)
Spring 2020	Energy and Planning Site visit to a net carbon neutral development.
March/April 2020	Transport Meeting with Go South Coast bus operator to discuss opportunities and barriers to increasing bus travel's contribution to carbon reduction.
20 April 2020	Full Task Group meeting
4 May 2020	Planning Session #3 of climate change councillor/officer focus group on the Local Plan .
TBC 2020	Full Task Group meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider draft 'Climate Change' section of the Business Plan (following Full Council resolution on 26 November 2019)

2. Housing Aids and Adaptations Task Group

Membership

Cllr Trevor Carbin

Cllr Bob Jones

Cllr Carole King

Cllr Gordon King

Cllr Pip Ridout (Chairman)

Supporting Officer: Natalie Heritage

Terms of Reference

1. To consider the ways in which Wiltshire Council can reduce the waiting time for residents with disabilities to access suitable housing, through:
 - a) Reviewing how the Council works with Housing Associations and private landlords, to increase the availability of suitably adapted properties
 - b) Reviewing the use of the Disabled Facilities Grant in Wiltshire and whether there is scope for further work with partners, to help them access this funding
 - c) Assessing whether all future Wiltshire Council housing stock could be built with some degree of adaptation, to meet current building regulations
 - d) Assessing whether relative design standards for new build properties could become policy for all affordable housing providers in Wiltshire.
2. Consider how the Council could incorporate new build standards into its Local Plan, to help ensure that there is a sufficient supply of aided and adapted properties to meet the needs of residents with disabilities in Wiltshire.
3. Consider data in providing suitable and adapted properties for residents with disabilities and make recommendations, where appropriate, for improvement.
4. Consider the Council's Housing Allocations Policy and whether there is scope for disabled individuals to access housing outside of the Homes4Wiltshire scheme.

Recent Activity

19 December 2019

The Task Group met on 19 December 2019 for a briefing with the Director of Housing and Commercial Development and Head of Housing. Members were given an overview of the process for obtaining a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in Wiltshire and considered data about how long it takes for a DFG to be approved, as well as the average time taken for the necessary work to be completed. Alongside this, members looked at survey results from DFG applicants; specifically, how customers found the application process and their satisfaction with the length of time to have an adaptation installed in their home.

The Task Group agreed that spatial planning and development control have an integral role to play in ensuring that properties are always built to a certain, specific standard and that they can be easily adapted, if appropriate, in the future. As a result, members will be meeting with the Council's Residential Development Manager to learn about the Council's standards for housing and how this is enforced.

22 January 2020

The Task Group also met on 22 January to discuss the work that the Council has been undertaking with its Registered Providers (RPs) around negotiating adaptable and affordable housing. It was clear that the Council needed to establish a policy about adaptable and affordable homes, so that any non-compliance could be properly enforced; as the Council has no enforcement power at present.

A recommendation was outlined in the meeting's report, proposing that the Council require that the M4(2) standard be applied for all affordable housing, with the ability to negotiate M4(3) where a need is identified. The Task Group unanimously supported this recommendation.

Alongside this information, members considered data around work funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The recent recruitment of three housing-specific Occupational Therapists had meant that more complex housing cases had reached a resolution, typically through the Council paying a 'move-on' grant of up to £1000 to help house the individual in a property that better suited their needs. It was stressed that this option would only be pursued if it was less expensive than adapting the individual's current property.

As the Task Group felt that they had already looked in-depth at the process for DFGs, they decided to remove the DFG meeting from their Forward Plan. Additionally, it was agreed that the Private Sector Housing Strategy and Council Housing Allocations Policy could be covered in one meeting.

The Cabinet Member suggested that the Task Group attend a workshop on the Local Plan Review, organised by Spatial Planning, as he felt that scrutiny could add more value here, as opposed to meeting separately with officers. Thus, it was agreed to remove the 'Local Plan Review' meeting from the Task Group's Forward Plan.

Proposal:

That the Environment Select Committee:

- i. Notes the Task Group Updates report**
- ii. Endorses the Housing Aids and Adaptations Task Group's recommendation, that the Council require that the M4(2) standard be applied for all affordable housing, with the ability to negotiate M4(3) where a need is identified**

Report authors:

Natalie Heritage, Senior Scrutiny Officer, T: 01225 718062 / E:

Natalie.Heritage@wiltshire.gov.uk

Henry Powell, Senior Scrutiny Officer, T: 01225 718052 / E:

Henry.Powell@wiltshire.gov.uk