

Notes

Carbon Neutral Working Group

Date:	Monday, 29 November 2021
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes
Present:	<p><u>Councillors</u></p> <p>Tommy Threlfall (Chairman), Chris Dixon, Noreen Griffiths, Karen Henshaw, Bobby Rigby, Stan Trudgill and Viv Willder.</p> <p><u>Officers</u></p> <p>Tracy Manning, Mark Evans (via remote access), Andrew Rayner.</p>
Note Taker:	Hannah Kirk

1. Introductions and apologies

The Chairman, Councillor Tommy Threlfall, welcomed those in attendance to the meeting.

In doing so, Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, was invited to give an overview of the progress of the Working Group and informed members that work on policy introduction would continue in the new year.

2. Update on the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, invited Mark Evans, Head of Planning and Housing, to provide an update on the progress of the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy. In doing so, Mr Evans highlighted that the draft strategy document (previously circulated) was a continuation of the work started by the Planning Committee and the previous Arboriculture and Landscape Strategy Working Group. The aim had been to create a single document to address the lack of tree cover across the borough and outline actions that would seek to remedy this. It was noted that Theme Five: Landscaping within new developments required further work and that the overall development of the document had been paused in anticipation of the publication of the Government's National Tree Strategy. Members were advised that targets could be set in terms of the percentage of tree cover, if it was deemed necessary, and a baseline would need to be established. Mr. Evans advised that this document would be one of several published to support the Local Plan.

Following questions, Mr. Evans advised that the tree planting carried out by Fylde as part of the capital programme in 2019/20 and 2021/22 looked to plant larger trees to have a more immediate impact. However, this had been proving difficult due to constraints regarding land ownership across the borough. Andrew Rayner, Arboriculture Officer, further advised that it was key to undertake these larger-scale schemes in the appropriate environment to ensure successful tree growth.

Notes – Carbon Neutral Working Group – 29 November 2021

Mr. Rayner further highlighted to the Working Group that the option for a continuous budget would need to be explored to support the maintenance of the trees in the future, following the initial £25,000 budget received.

It was noted that the implementation of the Tree and Woodland Strategy would be a starting point to promoting tree planting in the local community, along with the support of the Carbon Neutral Working Group and the Communications team.

Further to this, it was advised that an event at Lytham Hall during National Tree Planting Week in 2022 had been discussed, in which attendees would receive a tree planting pack and the Council could work in conjunction with the Woodland Trust and local landowners. It was further advised that this could be used as an educational exercise, and to establish the level of interest in tree planting from residents in Fylde. Lytham Hall were said to be keen to engage with schools to educate pupils on identifying various tree species, with support from their lead volunteer, John Hornyak. Mr. Rayner reported that he had been in contact with the Forestry Commission who had also expressed an interest in the event. There had also been discussions of working with Myerscough College to support Arbor Day, which takes place in February, in which companies donate trees to be planted around the campus.

Mr. Evans advised that following the completion of the document's design guidance chapter and ensuring that it corresponded with the national strategy, a report would be taken to the Planning Committee to seek approval of the document's adoption into a library of work that supports the Local Plan. It was further advised that the overall objective would be to increase the tree canopy cover to 13%, with an increase of 3% by 2032 and further 3% by 2050. A survey would need to be carried out across the borough to establish the full extent of work required, which would have a cost implication to consider. One option suggested was to commission Blue Sky, a company that provides aerial surveys, which would show a very broad tree canopy cover. It was suggested that this would be the most cost-effective method but may not provide the most accurate results. A second option would be to commission a company to carry out a ward-by-ward tree canopy survey, which would support establishing a baseline percentage of cover, which could be revisited at a regular basis. It was reported that the average cost of such a survey in 2019/2020 was £7,200, but an up-to-date figure would need to be obtained. Mr. Rayner suggested inviting the various survey providers to attend a future meeting of the Working Group to do a presentation to members, enabling an informed decision. It was discussed that the survey could potentially be funded from any underspend in the tree planting budget. There was capacity within the budget to facilitate this as the take-up of the 15 trees for 15 parishes had not been taken up as widely as anticipated (see item below).

Mr Evans also raised the possibility of a capital budget being made available in the longer-term to both deal with the maintenance of trees as well as a tree planting programme to be informed by the tree planting survey. Mrs. Manning undertook to seek feedback on this proposal*

Following the conclusion of the report, it was approved:

1. To commend the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy to the Planning Committee for approval;
2. For Mr. Rayner to establish quotes with various survey providers as discussed.
3. Update on tree planting and the 15 Trees for 15 Parishes initiative

The Chairman invited Mr. Evans to provide an update on the progress of the 15 Trees for 15 Parishes initiative. He advised that Mr. Rayner had been communicating with the respective town and parish councils within Fylde. As a result, 7 out of 15 councils had engaged with the initiative thus far, which had led to 149 trees out of the 225 aim, unaccounted for. Further to this, Mr. Rayner highlighted that if there was an underspend in the budget following the conclusion of the project, this could be used to fund the survey.

* Feedback received was that this would be worthy of consideration at future budget rounds subject to the current capital funding for the tree planting initiative being successfully expended through a planned tree planting programme.

Notes – Carbon Neutral Working Group – 29 November 2021

Following a full discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Rayner would send a reminder via email to the remaining parish councils, with an overview of the requirements that need to be fulfilled in the application and do all that he could to support parishes in this regard.

4. Any Other Business

Mr. Evans reported that Councillor Trevor Fiddler, Chairman of Planning Committee, had raised some concerns with regards to the 'ownership' of the various projects undertaken by the Carbon Neutral Working Group. As a result, Councillor Fiddler had agreed with Councilor Threlfall, Chairman of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, that it would be sensible for the EHH Committee to oversee the implementation of the tree planting programme going forward. In practice, this would mean that the same officers would deal with the tree planting initiative and reports to committee i.e. Mark Evans (subject to any changes in the management review) but would report to the EHH Committee as opposed to the Planning Committee. Mrs. Manning advised that she did not believe that a change in the Terms of Reference would be required to achieve this as tree planting was not specifically mentioned within the terms of reference of the Planning Committee whereas environmental sustainability was mentioned within the remit of the EHH Committee. Mr. Evans also outlined he would that he would liaise with Mark Wilde, Head of Parks, Leisure and Cultural Services to discuss whether there was scope for an additional resource, such as an apprentice, to support this programme of work and its delivery.

Councillor Karen Henshaw reported that she had been in contact with Councillor David Henderson, the Leader of Wyre Council, to discuss Wyre Council's Carbon Literate Organisation Bronze award. In turn, Councillor Henderson shared the contact details of Sammy Gray, Climate Change Officer at Wyre Council to discuss what the council was doing in terms of climate change. Councillor Henshaw offered to share the correspondence with the Democratic Services team to circulate to members and it was suggested that Ms. Gray be invited to lead a presentation to the Working Group in the new year.

5. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.
