

Climate Emergency Action Plan Update Mar 2022

We are one year on from the recognition of a Climate Emergency by Earley Town Council. The Action Plan contains Key Activities under 7 separate headings. Following discussions with the Climate Emergency Working group members and Officers, this document is an updated version of the Key Activities.

It must be acknowledged that without the full support of the Town Clerk and all Officers, almost all the Action Plan activities would not be possible. It is clear that in the everyday activities of Earley Council's staff, adherence to green principles and practices are second nature and many of the achievements have been down to staff enthusiasm.

A key principle for dealing with the Climate Emergency is to apply appropriate consideration to all decisions made by Council and Officers. To this end, Officers have undertaken training on an on-going basis and have subscribed to initiatives like the WBC "Lets talk Climate". Consideration is needed as to whether Councillors should also undertake such training.

Key Activities – March 2022

1 Securing finance and practical support

Not all projects in the Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan will cost Earley Town Council money. Some projects are expected to save money, and some could generate revenue. Various sources of funding and practical help are available, including support for the crucial development process prior to submitting bids for project funding, or for projects that have already been defined.

There is no specific budget heading for Climate Emergency activities – however, in the 2022-23 Financial Plan, there is £4,000 for Green events in the A&L budget and £30,000 for Environmental Projects in the Earmarked Reserves.

1.1 Identify sources of technical and financial support, including grants and cost sharing, from the Government, Wokingham Borough Council, charities and other external sources. This has to be on a project-by-project basis as it will be context specific

1.2 Actively consider ways that Earley Town Council's share of Community Infrastructure Levy funds might be used to support the Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan. To be considered on project-by-project basis – any recommendation on use of CIL funding would be made by the TC - note this can be restrictive and the Ear Marked fund would be first call.

2 Earley Town Council facilities:

2.1 Identify and implement opportunities for reducing energy consumption. Significant work has already been done on minor works. Larger projects are being planned such as Maiden Place plant renewal which is budgeted for this year.

2.2. Wherever practicable, switch all electricity and gas accounts to 100% renewable/green sources or carbon offset energy.

Gas supply

ETC's gas supplier ceased to trade in late 2021. Ofgen allocated a new supplier (at increased costs and with very poor customer reviews). This was considered unsatisfactory and ETC then went to an energy broker specialising in working for not-for profit organisations and secured a new gas contract. The new gas contract costs 250% more than the previous contract.

The broker was asked to look at green energy contracts but the potential increase would have been closer to 1,000%. Although consideration of Climate Emergency issues is important, in these uncertain times, ETC are always required to consider 'best value' on behalf of residents and the differential in this case is currently too great. To be kept under review when the energy crisis abates and as contract end.

Electrical supply

Currently the electrical contract is on a "conventional" tariff in which only 36.2% is renewables (including 6.9% nuclear). The current contract ends on 1st August 2022 and 30 days' notice is required to terminate. – The CEWG recommends that ETC moves to a tariff that includes electricity generated only from Hydro, Wind, Tidal, Geothermal and PV – not Biomass and waste incineration as both produce air pollution. It is acknowledged this will be at a higher cost than present.

2.3 Commission an Energy Performance Certificate Advisor to suggest ways to improve ratings. This will be pursued without delay for the Main Council Offices, Maiden Place CC and Radstock CC to update the previous EPCs. Action required from Officers.

2.4 Ensure Display Energy Certificates / Energy Performance Certificates are prominently displayed in all Town Council buildings. The three key buildings have DEC's displayed which are valid for 10 years from day of issue. However, they need updating so ETC knows where they are, not where they were some years ago as usage and operational aspects have changed.

2.5 Develop and encourage people to follow 'Green Guidance' for Earley Town Council indoor and outdoor facilities that are hired and used by the public. Outstanding and currently following Covid guidance, with high levels of ventilation recommended, this is unfortunately at odds with minimising energy losses.

2.6 Transition fully, wherever practicable, to LED energy efficient lighting, including Earley Town Council owned streetlights. With regard to the street lamps – 65 of 67 ETC owned street lamps have been converted to LEDs (the remainder are not suitable)

Some others has been done including floodlights on Radstock House.

2.7 Consider building ring-fenced reserves for the most costly environmental improvements, such as solar panels and retrofitting of council-owned buildings with high levels of insulation. The financial plan includes £30k in Earmarked Reserve. The normal process is to develop proposals with Officers and the Climate Emergency Working Group to look at budget proposals.

2.8. Explore opportunities for, benefits and costs of rainwater harvesting. After considering the estate, it is only practical for allotments.

3 The 3 Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle

3.1 Reduce, wherever practicable, the amount of printing associated with Earley Town Council activities, through changes such as more effective electronic working and storage. In law, a meeting agenda has to be delivered to a Councillor's register address. Options for e-delivery to be available – this to be an item on Council agenda as it has to be individual choice.

3.2 Reduce use of single-use plastics, including during Council meetings and functions. Actioned

3.4 Reuse, including a feasibility study for an Earley Share and Repair Café, similar to the Silverdale Bicycle Workshop, that could be based in one of the Town Council facilities. No action yet – aggravated by pending closure of Silverdale Centre.

3.5 Recycle, including investigating the practicality and financial costs of providing segregated litter bins (separating recyclables and non-recyclables) on Earley Town Council owned land and within Town Council facilities. With Officers for consideration as new bins needed in Meadow Park – this can be problematic with cross contamination and economies of scale are not favourable. An approach has been made to WBC to piggyback on any Borough wide initiatives.

3.5.1 ETC dealing with waste: General waste that is from our litter bins and dog bins in our public spaces, ie parks, cemetery etc. is collected by ETC staff and goes into a central bin situated at the cemetery, from where, it is collected by a contractor for incineration in energy production plant. Recyclable waste from bins etc. is also collected by a contractor. Glass is stored in bulk and either sent for recycling in the glass market or ground down for aggregate when the waste glass market is saturated.

The small amount of waste produced at the Council offices such as paper/card is collected for recycling. Food, plastics and glass are collected and disposed of by individual staff volunteers via household collections.

4 Replace petrol / diesel consuming equipment and vehicles, and provision of electric vehicle charging points

4.1 When due for replacement, wherever practicable, replace petrol consuming equipment, such as strimmer's, leaf blowers and chain saws, with battery powered alternatives. Ongoing replacement underway to move to battery power implements ensuring battery compatibility across all plant.

4.2 When replacing petrol and diesel vehicles, consider the options (including leasing) of electric and other less polluting alternatives. With Officers – there is £60K in Earmarked Reserves for vehicles and several are in excess of 10 years old. ETC has received advice that commercial, all electric vehicles are currently not suitable – this will be reviewed in 12 months or if a vehicle requires replacement – whichever is the sooner.

4.3 Provide electric vehicle charging points in the Earley Town Council Car park for staff and Earley Town Council vehicles. Outstanding - awaiting liaison with WBC – with officers

4.4 Investigate opportunities for the installation of electric vehicle charging points at other Earley Town Council owned or managed sites, such as at Sol Joel Park. Grants are available BUT the charging point must be available to members of the public 24/7 which is problematic for any ETC property related to preventing antisocial behaviours and security of car parks at night.

5 Procurement

5.1 For all large tenders (as defined in financial regulations), require a statement from bidders showing how they recognise there is a Climate Emergency and what their approach is to deal with it. Evaluation of tenders will consider this information.

6 Community engagement and behavioural change

Earley Town Council acknowledges that not everyone sees climate and the environment as priorities, let alone an emergency requiring immediate and coordinated action.

Notwithstanding, there are valuable opportunities to reach out to residents via areas of common interest such as traffic congestion, air pollution, flooding, and threats to open spaces, to encourage practical actions that residents can take to help address such matters.

6.1 Publicise the health and well-being benefits (including financial) to be gained from taking action on the Climate Emergency. Outstanding – Ideas required from WG - The walking routes publication is an example. Article to be drafted for the website- action Chair

6.2 Publicise grants and other forms of help available to residents to help retrofit homes. Need to publicise links to Wokingham BC website - needs incorporating in new website. See links below

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/wokingham/info/files/hil_leaflet_wok_v3_0.pdf

<http://www.fhil.org/loans-for-homeowners-aged-60/>

6.3 Maintain a dedicated page on the Earley Town Council website for all matters relating to its declaration of Climate Emergency. Awaiting new website construction.

6.4 Promote greater awareness of the Climate Emergency via noticeboards, signage on Earley Town Council vehicles, bus shelters and litter bins, including the actions that Earley residents can take to help tackle the Climate Emergency. Outstanding – ideas from WG required. Also note, the upgrading of bus stops may incorporate suitable notice boards.

6.5 Consider a report from the Climate Emergency Working Group as a Standing Item at each Full Council meeting – Actioned - TC to add to Full Council agenda

6.6 Include Earley Town Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan as a Standing Item at the Annual Town Electors' Meetings. Actioned - TC to add to Annual Town Elector's meeting agenda

6.7 Encourage others, including local schools and local businesses, in their contributions to tackling the Climate Emergency. Outstanding with WG for ideas

6.8 Continue current support initiatives to existing environmental groups that help protect and manage open spaces, such as the Earley Environmental Group and Friends of Highwood. Encourage the formation of similar groups for other open spaces. Councillor Mickleburgh action for an update

6.9 Continue to fully support the Earley Green Fair. Ongoing, if it goes ahead this year.

6.10 To consider active supporting third party events such as school and community events on a case-by-case basis – currently none known and Covid restriction have stifled many.

6.11 Seek to fulfil demand for allotments, community gardens and orchards where opportunities arise. Limited by land availability.

6.12 Engage, encourage and inform residents and local businesses about community events that help achieve the objectives of the Earley Climate Emergency Action. Examples could include the Big Litter pick, no-mow-May and the 26 to COP26 series of events that were Officer led and highly successful.

6.13 Encourage local groups to apply for Earley Town Council grants for activities that would help to achieve the objectives of the Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan. To be discussed with relevant Committee – and advertised – P&R responsibility to consider if there should be a specific financial allocation.

6.14 Recognise, promote, and celebrate publicly, the achievements of residents, groups and local businesses undertaking activities that support the objectives of the Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan. None known of - ask MERA etc. for any activities. WG action

7 Green Spaces, including roadside verges and urban trees

7.1 Seek to protect all existing green spaces. Over 20 suggested to WBC for inclusion in Local Plan and at least 17 accepted. Extensive response from Planning Committee submitted to WBC including reconsideration of four areas

7.2 Continue to protect and manage Earley Town Council owned land, including roadside wild flower beds, to increase biodiversity and drawdown carbon pollution to improve air quality. Rangers already actioning.

7.3 Explore opportunities for planting more hedgerows on Earley Town Council owned land. Rangers already actioning

7.4 Continue to encourage those responsible to ensure that the embodied carbon in trees that are felled or reduced through tree surgery is used for mulch, or in other ways that effectively return the trapped carbon to the soil. Rangers already actioning

7.5 Regularly review the Earley Town Council Trees Policy to ensure that it is consistent with best practice with respect to the Climate Emergency. Underway through A&L.

7.6 Maintain an inventory of trees that have been newly planted by Earley Town Council, supporting their growth and replenishing when necessary. Awaiting action from separate WG