

Agenda Item: **Climate and Nature Emergency Panel Public Meeting**

Report to: **Finance and General Purposes Committee**

Date: **Wednesday 23rd March 2022**

Subject: **To review project plan for public meeting**

Summary: The committee is asked to review the project plan for funding from the Climate, Nature and Environment budget.

Recommendation

- a) To review project plan from Climate, Nature and Environment Committee**
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1. Background and objective

- 1.1 The Climate and Nature Emergency Panel is an advisory committee of the council that has been set up to hold public sessions (dates and venues to be decided by the panel in conjunction with the town clerk) for members to learn about the climate and nature challenges we face, to research and debate local possible solutions and to form and present a list of priorities and recommendations to Full Council.

2. Public Event

- 2.1 The advisory committee has researched the plan and costs for its first public event.
- 2.2 The purpose of the event will be for specialist speakers to inform council members and the public on the key topics associated with the climate emergency action plan. The participants will record their views during the event and these will be used by the Panel to feed into the council's climate action plan.
- 2.3 The event will be held in St Barnabas Church Hall and the group have an agenda plan for the day as follows:

a) Title

1. Climate change – what should Bexhill do?
2. It's an emergency and it affects our town – climate change (Use this maybe for a poster)

b) Overview

Climate change, while widely acknowledged, still feels to many like a distant and theoretical problem. It's not. If we act now, we can make a difference, for us and our children/grandchildren. The huge hikes in energy bills and other costs of living are now bringing home to us all the value of self-sufficiency, and it's important that we engage with the public about what steps Bexhill can take and they would welcome.

c) Background

In June 2021 the Town Council declared a climate emergency, agreed to raise awareness about climate and nature, and pledged to support the town becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This included developing evidence-based ideas and solutions through the involvement of local people, organisations and business representatives, led by experts.

d) Engagement

To this end, the Climate, Nature and Environment Committee decided to hold a public engagement assembly. Its aims are:

- to hear from experts about what practical steps could be most useful
- to listen and discuss with residents their own suggestions and priorities
- to disseminate ideas on what practical steps the council could take
- to learn what measures other towns have found successful
- to contribute to the five-year plan on climate, nature and environment in Bexhill.

e) How it will work

To maximise participation, on arrival, residents will be asked to list on a Post-it note and stick up, three topics on environment and climate they are interested in. After a brief introduction, the plan is for five experts to "pitch" for 3 minutes each on five areas of activity – energy, transport, food, waste and nature – and give examples of what can be done. Residents will then contribute to each of these groups, with the experts, in a "carousel" model. We also hope to invite some input from Rother and ESCC on their plans. Local organisations will have the opportunity to showcase their work in a stall, to maximise networking, and we hope that town councillors will volunteer to help by noting the comments made by residents in their groups.

Coffee will be served.

The meeting will end in a Q and A session, and a summary.

f) The facilitator

The meeting will be facilitated by Graham Dawson. Graham is an experienced local public meeting facilitator with the skills to ensure that the meeting is effective, efficient and productive. Graham comes highly recommended to the town council and his role will ensure that councillors can focus on participating in the discussions and gather as much input from residents as possible.

3. Economic Case. Is it achievable? Is the town council capable of delivering the project?

- 4.1 The town council has set aside a budget for the Climate, Nature and Environment Committee of £20,000 for climate projects in 2022-23.
- 4.2 There are some costs that can be covered through sponsorship with local businesses and organisations once the event plan is agreed.
- 4.3 The projected costs summary:

Hall Hire	£150
Refreshments	£50
Facilitator	£305
Staff Costs	£200
Contingency	£100
TOTAL	£805

4. Is it value for money? Has a range of options been considered?

- 5.1 'Online only' consultation would save budget however it may not be accessible to all residents and may exclude full participation. There is a view that face to face interaction would be more engaging.
- 5.2 Speakers and groups will need framework and direction to be efficient in producing the feedback needed for the climate action plan. There is a risk that a public meeting can be taken over with off-topic discussions or can become lengthy and counter-productive. The Panel should be minded to prepare a structured agenda and brief the facilitator and speakers on the exact specification of the event.
- 5.3 Is it the best balance of costs/ benefits and risks?

Some costs, if not all, can be reduced through sponsorship. Once the council has approved the plan and there is a structured event plan the clerk will seek local sponsors for the event.
- 5.4 Speakers will be sought locally at no charge.
- 5.5 Councillors will be asked to participate to manage the event on the day.
- 5.6 Staff may be asked to work to support the organisation of the event. Staff that work on a Saturday are entitled to the 'Green Book' condition of payment at a rate of 'time and a half'. This can either be paid or taken as time off in lieu. Time off in lieu will keep officer costs to a minimum.

6. Financial Case. Is it affordable? - Are the costs realistic and affordable?

- 6.1 The council currently holds a total budget of £20,000 under the Climate, Nature and Environment Committee to provide for climate related projects. The estimated cost of this project is £805.
- 6.2 Sponsorship could be sought to cover the costs of the printing; however, this could delay the implementation of the project and time is of the essence. Sponsorship could also compromise the independent nature of the survey and may create questions over its legitimacy.

7. Management Case. Is there robust systems and processes in place?

- 7.1 The proper officer is responsible for the organisation of the event, conducting the risk assessment and ensuring implementing at the event.

8. Timescales

- 8.1 The following deadlines are to be considered:

Panel meetings to finalise plan	18 th March 2022
Event plan/RA agreed by proper officer	8 th April 2022
Agenda agreed (speakers agreed)	15 th April 2022
Speakers confirmed for booking	22 nd April 2022
Councillors and event staff confirmed	28 th April 2022
Supplies purchased	21 st May 2022
Event takes place	28 th May 2022

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 The town council can use the power under the Local Government Act 1972 s111 to act for the benefit of the community by tackling and promoting awareness of environmental issues.

10. Insurance

- 10.1 The council has public liability insurance which it can use for the event. A risk assessment must be carried out and mitigating actions completed.

11. Impact on Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 11.1 The council should consider the use of remote meeting tools, to cut down the amount of emissions generated through travelling to panel and group meetings.

11.2 The council could consider how it will offset the carbon footprint through a tree planting scheme or other similar initiative should it use an amount of paper and stationery materials.

11.3 The council could consider using electronic devices at the event to reduce the amount of paper required.

12. Community Consultation/ Engagement

12.1 No specific community engagement has taken place to establish a need for a climate action plan, this is a decision of the full council.

13. Risk Assessment

13.1 The council has identified the following risks and mitigation strategies:

Risk	Mitigation
a. The event may not be well attended.	The event is on a weekend to ensure working residents can attend and will be advertised in the local community and online and in the Observer.
b. Speakers/event management may not attend due to illness or such like	A back up plan shall be implemented in the case of organisers or speakers not attending at short notice.
c. Participants may dominate the meeting with specific issues that are not relevant to the topics of climate action.	The facilitator will be experienced in managing public meetings and be fully briefed on the agenda prior to the meeting.
d. Residents with accessibility issues may not be able to attend the meeting. Those with hearing/sight difficulties may need additional assistance to fully participate.	The St Barnabas hall is disability accessible and notices/marketing can include asking those with additional needs to contact the clerk.
e. The event does not provide sufficient feedback for the climate action plan.	The Climate and Nature Emergency Panel will provide the required subject headings to keep the meeting focused on the feedback required. The facilitator and speakers will be briefing prior to the meeting.
g. The town council may not act upon the priorities stated by the residents, having a detrimental effect on the council’s reputation and residents could be left disillusioned or not willing to be involved again in the future.	The Panel shall ensure that all ideas are captured sufficiently during the meeting to be able to publish the raw data prior to the drawing up of the plan for residents to see their ideas in print.

14. Action Plan

- 14.1 An event action plan will be drawn up by the proper officer and managed in conjunction with the Climate, Nature and Emergency Panel.
- 14.2 A de-brief of the event will take place to draw on experiences to provide advice for future public meetings.

15. Summary

- 15.1 The Climate, Nature and Environment Committee is recommended ask the Finance and General Purposes Committee to ratify the project and delegate the final decision making to the proper officer under Local Government Act 1972 s101 in conjunction with the advisory committee to ensure expedient actions.

16. Decision Required

- a) **To agree project plan for public meeting.**
- b) **To agree budget of £805.**
- c) **To agree delegation of final arrangements to proper officer in conjunction with the Climate and Nature Emergency Panel advisory committee.**
- d) **To agree to refer the project to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for ratification.**