

Surrey's Greener Future Task and Finish Group

The process for establishing a Task and Finish Group is as follows:

1. The Select Committee identifies a topic that requires detailed consideration and examination.
2. The Select Committee Chairman and DSO complete the scoping template.
3. The Select Committee agrees membership of the Task and Finish Group.

Review Topic: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
Select Committee: Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee
Relevant background: During the Leader's Speech at Full Council in May 2019, Chairmen of the Select Committees were asked to consider setting up a working group alongside Cabinet to develop an Environmental Charter. The group's role will be to ensure that ambitions set out in the Vision for Surrey in 2030 and specifically the ambition for place, that ' <i>Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities</i> ' are being progressed and can be achieved.
Why this is a scrutiny item The Prime Minister has made a commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. To ensure we align our council priorities with that of the government, we must ensure that we are doing everything in our power to reduce carbon emissions. To that end, the council adopted a motion on 9 July 2019: This council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. commit to working closely with the Government, the Environment Agency, our Borough & District colleagues, local businesses, our residents and other partners in meeting this ambitious target;2. deliver a strategy in 2019/20 involving a task group that clearly outlines how we plan to deliver the target including actions that will be taken.;3. write to the government asking them to confirm what support will be made available to local authorities to help achieve this goal; and4. declares a 'Climate Emergency', and commits actions to support businesses and all local authorities in their work to tackle climate change by providing a strong unified voice for councils in lobbying for support to address this emergency, and sharing best practice across all councils. Residents told us in the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 that they care about the environment and value the number of open and green spaces in the county. The following ambition for place was agreed that ' <i>Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities</i> '.

Through various engagement with residents, Members are of the view that residents have grave concerns about the environment and the role of councils within this. This manifests itself in a number of ways, including air quality, access to the countryside, road congestion and alternative transport options, energy supply and waste – both in terms of recycling and reducing level of waste in the first place (e.g. single use plastics.)

What questions are the group aiming to answer?

- What does the term ‘environmental responsibilities’ mean to residents, staff and partners?
- What is the council’s current approach to reduce carbon emissions and how effective has this been?
- What are Districts, Boroughs, Town and Parish Councils doing to address their environmental responsibilities and how do we best work with them?
- From the evidence available both nationally and internationally, what is seen to contribute most effectively to becoming carbon neutral?
- What does the research tells us about behaviour change required in communities – what would have the greatest impact?
- How environmentally sustainable are the council’s current policies?
- Where are the key health impacts and how will we address these as part of our 10-year health and wellbeing strategy?

Aim

That the Working Group identify the key principles of a draft ‘environment call for action’ through engagement with residents, staff and partners and recognise which environmental responsibilities are the most important for the people of Surrey and what action needs to be taken to address these.

Objectives

- To engage a cross-section of Surrey to understand range of perspectives on climate change and the actions required to address it.
- To develop a draft environment ‘call for action.’
- To review the council’s current policies and strategies from an environmental perspective.
- To build relationships across the system which support more joined-up action and better use of collective capacity.

Scope

This Task Group will work as part of a wider council programme to develop a response to the climate emergency declared by the council on 9 July 2019.

The Task Group’s scope first and foremost encompasses all of Surrey County Council’s activity which may contribute towards as well as mitigate against carbon emissions. The Task Group will also consider the wider impact of other public sector organisations and the private sector on the county’s environment with reference to energy, transport and air quality in order to develop a system-wide position.

Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

Increase in environmental awareness and a genuine urgency to tackle climate change.

Develop a clear call for action which will contribute to:

- A reduction in carbon emissions and an improvement in air quality especially in identified Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Surrey;
- A change in residents' behaviour (e.g. increase in recycling, reduction in road congestion, more sustainable travel)

Shared priorities with health, districts and boroughs and wider partnerships that will contribute to becoming a carbon neutral county.

Supports the delivery of the Community Vision for Surrey 2030, Surrey's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the council's wider transformation programme.

Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

- Officer and Member availability
- Lack of officer resources including committee support and officers with environment sustainability expertise
- Lack of engagement from Members and Witnesses
- Lack of willingness to engage from agencies that aren't statutorily required to provide evidence to the Committee
- Number of project work streams to consider, including links to Re-thinking Transport Programme.

Equalities implications

The Working Group recognises that there are a number considerations around equalities when conducting its work, and there are a number of people with various needs that will be contributing to this process. It will be mindful of how it conducts its work in order to ensure people are provided the opportunity to contribute, and that any barriers to doing so are mitigated.

The Group will monitor the equalities implications emerging from its recommendations with officers, and will work to identify mitigation measures for those with a potentially negative impact.

Task Group Members	Paul Deach Jonathan Essex Becky Rush Fiona White John O'Reilly (ex-officio) Prof Richard Murphy (co-optee)
Chairman of the Group	Andy MacLeod