

**ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
10TH MARCH 2020**

CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY GROUP

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Elizabeth Wainwright, Cabinet Member for Climate Change; Cllr Bob Deed, the Leader of the Council

Responsible Officer: Kathryn Tebbey, Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer)

Reason for Report: in light of Cllr Wainwright's appointment to the Cabinet, to consider whether to recommend to Cabinet the creation of a Climate Change Advisory Group in lieu of the Environment PDG's Net Zero Working Group.

RECOMMENDATION: that

- 1 it be Recommended to Cabinet that -**
 - (a) a Climate Change Advisory Group be established;**
 - (b) the membership of the Group comprise eight Members – 3 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrat, 2 Independent and 1 Green (not politically balanced); and**
 - (c) the terms of reference be finalised by the Group, unless the Cabinet wishes to set the general terms in line with those in this report; and**
- 2 it be Resolved that in the event that Cabinet agrees to establish a Climate Change Advisory Group, that the Net Zero Working Group be dissolved.**

Financial Implications: there is no specific budget for discrete climate change projects at the moment. However, cabinet has indicated their intention to review the capital budget early in the next financial year with a view to establishing how the council's investment programme can better reflect the emerging Corporate Plan (2020-24) including ambitions on reducing Carbon emissions. In terms of meetings, the new CCAG would meet on a frequency as defined by the group itself.

Budget and Policy Framework: See above.

Legal Implications: As set out in this report.

Risk Assessment: A co-ordinated approach to Climate Change will greatly assist the Council to as a whole to meet corporate plan and other policy objectives. It will underpin the Council's climate emergency declaration.

Equality Impact Assessment: None directly arising. As with any work of the Council, equalities issues should be at the heart of all proposals and decision-making.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The proposed recommendations would create an advisory group on an issue central to the emerging Corporate Plan (2020-24).

Impact on Climate Change: The proposed recommendations would create an advisory group on an issue central to the emerging Corporate Plan (2020-24). The group will be able to advise Cabinet on how best to achieve the Council's commitments with regard to the Devon Climate Declaration agreed by the Council in June 2019 – as well as helping to shape policy to go through appropriate PDGs before feeding into Cabinet.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Cllr Elizabeth Wainwright has been appointed to Cabinet with the portfolio for Climate Change. Consequently, she cannot continue to sit on the Environment PDG. Whilst Cllr Jo Norton has taken her place, some thought has been given to Cllr Wainwright's particular interest in and portfolio responsibility for Climate Change – and how she might continue to facilitate and enable policy development whilst being a member of the Cabinet.
- 1.2 It must also be remembered that the Environment PDG has created a Net Zero Working Group which meets informally. Again, Cllr Wainwright can no longer sit on that working group.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 Cllr Wainwright would like to continue with work on climate change beyond the day-to-day workings of a Cabinet member. Whilst this can be done informally by liaising with officers and members, it would be good to give some specific forum.
- 2.2 Whilst the current arrangements could continue unchanged and Cllr Wainwright works separately on her portfolio work, Members might consider that it would be useful to join up this work in a suitable forum. On a similar basis, the Planning Policy Advisory Group was established in 2011 to be such a forum.
- 2.3 A Climate Change Advisory Group could perform a similar role whether through advising Cabinet, gathering information or hearing evidence and ideas. It could also work with officers to develop cohesive plans to reduce the environmental impact of Council services and help devise strategies, initiatives and identify opportunities. Any policy or decision would still come up through the Environment PDG in the usual way and then on to Cabinet. Whilst it would not meet in public, the outcomes/output would, if requiring a decision, be through the PDG, Cabinet and, in some cases, the Council. This would ensure openness and transparency at the key decision points.
- 2.4 The terms of reference could be left quite loose to enable the Group to respond to the evolving climate change debate. For example, the terms could be along the following lines:
 - To gather information, ideas and evidence to inform the Council's response to climate change, including meeting, as appropriate, with various individuals, organisations, communities and stakeholders

- To work with officers in devising actions, initiatives, strategies and policies to mitigate climate change and accordingly make recommendations to Cabinet (via the PDGs where appropriate)
- To identify challenges and opportunities for the Council in meeting the terms of the Devon Climate Declaration adopted on 26th June 2019.

2.5 The Environment PDG, if minded to recommend a Climate Change Advisory Group, could leave the terms of reference and membership numbers to the Cabinet to decide. It could be subject to a schedule of meetings, but might better be left to meet on a 'need to meet' basis.

2.6 Unless the membership of the Climate Change Advisory Group is set at 12 members, applying the political balance rules would mean that no Green councillor would have a seat on the Group. A Group of 12 members seems unnecessarily large. Therefore, it is recommended that the membership be 8 councillors, but that the group is not politically-balanced. However, to ensure that all political groups have a presence, it is suggested that the 8 Members are – 3 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrat, 2 Independent and 1 Green.

3.0 Consequences

3.1 If Members of the Environment PDG agree to recommend that a Climate Change Advisory Group is established and Cabinet agrees, it would seem sensible to re-consider the continued value of the Net Zero Working Group. With the risk of duplication of work and effort, it is suggested that the Environment PDG might choose to dissolve the Working Group and a recommendation is made for that purpose.

Contact for more Information: Kathryn Tebbey, Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer) (01884) 234210 ktebbey@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member; Chairman of Environment PDG; Leadership Team

List of Background Papers: None.