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Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 4th October 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J Hubbard (Chair)
Councillor C Goodhind (Vice-Chair)
Councillor P Aves
Councillor S Crundell
Councillor S Mortimer
Councillor G Ellis
Councillor S Rabey

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Lewis

OFFICERS: Linda Roberts Town Clerk
Miriam Zaccarelli Community Development Officer

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: One member of the press was present.

136/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Oatley and Cooke.

137/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

138/21 Wiltshire Council Draft Climate Strategy and Natural Environment Plan Consultation

Members discussed at length mitigations to tackle climate change. It was agreed that individual members would respond to the survey and the Town Clerk would send a letter to Wiltshire Council confirming the thoughts of the Town Council (see attached). The consultation deadline is 17 October 2021.

Meeting Closed at: 8.50 pm

Signed:

Dated:

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Melksham Town Council

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Tel: (01225) 704187

Town Clerk and RFO Linda Roberts BA(Hons) PGCAP, FHEA, FLSCC

Councillor Richard Clewer – Leader
Wiltshire Council
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

6th October 2021

Dear Councillor Clewer

Draft Climate Change Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Climate Change Strategy.

Melksham Town Council convened a special meeting to discuss Wiltshire Council's draft Climate Change Strategy to formulate a collective response to the consultation. The Town Council recognise that the climate emergency is the biggest threat facing the planet. Climate Change is a term widely used and it doesn't hurt to remind ourselves exactly what it means to humanity.

The real threats of Climate Change impact on temperature, precipitation, wind, human health is all caused by human activities. The result is that we are unbalancing the weather of the earth, the sustainability of the planet and the planet's ecosystems are under threat. According to NASA they suggest it is a 'broad range of global phenomena created predominantly by burning fossil fuels, which add heat-trapping gases to the Earth's atmosphere, leading to increased temperature trends described by global warming, but also encompass changes such as sea-level rise, ice mass loss in Greenland, Antarctica, the Arctic, and mountain glaciers worldwide, shifts in flower/plant blooming, and extreme weather events.

As a County we must work together to have any real impact in reducing greenhouse emissions. Indeed, tackling climate change was identified by the Town Council as high on its list of priorities. It is committed to review working practices and do whatever it can to mitigate the effects of climate change, reducing our waste and lowering our carbon emissions. As an organisation we can make a small impact by adjusting our practices, but wouldn't it be better if all stakeholders in the County of Wiltshire worked together to tackle climate change head on? With a shared vision and ambitious targets? We believe that Wiltshire's Climate Change strategy could be the catalyst to facilitate such an approach.

As it stands the draft Climate Strategy in its current form does not offer or hint at such an approach. The Town Council would like to see clear measures in Wiltshire's strategy with the inclusion of mandatory, tangible, and meaningful targets. These targets should be reflected in the emerging Local Plan. The Town Council would also like to see Central Government lobbied so they bring about meaningful changes to tackle Climate Change through the National Planning Policy Framework.

The following are points raised by the Town Council in response to Wiltshire's draft Climate Change Strategy:

- The Climate Change emergency was declared in Feb 2019 but as a County we have not made any tangible progress.

Built Environment:

- Bring in development requirements and impose standards on new house builds, for example. There should be a requirement for social housing to include electric charging points.
- Provision should be made in terms of ducting when buildings are constructed. Whilst we do not know that electric will be the final salvation, if ducting is there, the infrastructure is in place for future options.

Transport

- The consultation is bus based; it should include rail. Buses run on diesel fuel. Network rail are looking at electrification. We should be aiming to reach the Dutch level of electric rail which is now at 68% electric; the UK is only 42% electric. Opening more lines and stations should be explored.
- Lobby Central Government to consider freight by train. This will take diesel lorries off the road; would reduce carbon emissions and take the stress from our highways meaning less highway improvements would be necessary.
- A target to encourage more walking and cycling should be included in Wiltshire's Climate Change Strategy with the provision of clearly defined cycling and pedestrian walkways accompanied by charging points for electric bikes.
- Wiltshire should be planning areas to host electric scooter schemes. It is highly likely that the pilot currently underway will lead to new legislation permitting the use of managed scooter schemes.
- Reducing speed reduces carbon emissions. A 20mph speed limit in built up urban areas should be implemented throughout Wiltshire. 20 is Plenty!
- Young people need to start thinking sustainably. They should be encouraged (through schemes in conjunction with their schools) to walk and cycle to school. In doing so they are being taught a lifelong habit.

Renewable Energy

- Wind energy should be back on Wiltshire's agenda and in the emerging Local Plan. It is acknowledged that subsidies for onshore wind have been greatly reduced and that offshore turbines are better, although sadly not something in Wiltshire's gift to aim for.
- There must be potential in Wiltshire to generate a lot of power and sell beyond Wiltshire. This possibility should be included in the emerging Local Plan.
- There is renewable energy potential in the river at Melksham.

Waste

- There should be goals/targets to achieve reductions in waste in the strategy and the emerging Local Plan should have a specific goal. Wiltshire Council are the authority dealing with Wiltshire's waste and measures to reduce waste should be the centre piece of your strategy.
- Wiltshire Recycling Centres should have more accessible opening hours or even better, to reduce car journeys to recycling centres implement more ambitious plans for doorstep recycling.
- Wiltshire should give serious consideration to food waste collection.
- Wiltshire should be encouraging and facilitating community composting.
- The policy of prohibiting users at Wiltshire's recycling centres to take away recycling left by others should be stopped, rather encouraged.
- Measures should be in place to ensure that Wiltshire's waste is managed in Wiltshire and not driven to other parts of the country. It should be Wiltshire's duty to manage Wiltshire's waste.
- There should be higher standards of recycling and the adoption of a more flexible approach to what is 'contaminated' recycling, ways to deal with it should be explored. A 'sort' system on site would prevent 'contaminated' recycling from going into landfill.

Natural Environment

- The draft strategy is far too vague about restoring woodlands and habitats. There should be quantifiable targets within the strategy with a separate ecological response for urban and rural areas. For example, how do we create habitats for birds and the mammal population in urban areas
- A target for rivers in Wiltshire should be set to include a natural wetland to either side of them where possible. The benefits, it slows down the river and provides habitats.

The Town Council are disappointed that the Strategy does not have any teeth, no tangible goals, or meaningful targets. The consultation appears to be an exercise where in effect we can only agree with the statements. It is not clear what the consultation is trying to achieve other than endorsement of the current draft strategy.

The Town Council did acknowledge Wiltshire Councils stock of electric pool cars and the policy of replacing their vehicles with electric ones and would like to congratulate Wiltshire Council on this initiative.

Your sincerely



Mrs L A Roberts
Town Clerk

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