

Report of the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel – Citizens’ Assembly

For Full Council on 21 April 2021

Summary

Lead Member: Councillor Matthew Bailey – Portfolio Holder for Sustainability

Lead Director: Paul Taylor - Director of Change & Communities

Head of Service: Gary Stevenson - Head of Housing, Health & Environment

Report Author: Paul Taylor – Director of Change & Communities

Classification: Public document (non-exempt)

Wards Affected: [All]

Approval Timetable	Date
Climate Emergency Advisory Panel	Thursday 21 January 2021
Management Board	Wednesday 27 January 2021
CEAP/Portfolio Holder	Thursday 28 January 2021
Communities and ED CAB	Wednesday 17 February
Cabinet	Thursday 11 March
Full Council	Wednesday 21 April 2021

Recommendations

The Climate Emergency Action Panel (CEAP) supported by the Portfolio Holder recommends:

1. That the report from the Climate Emergency Action Panel, and the options for public engagement on climate issues be noted; and
2. That Full Council debate and provide guidance on the preferred public engagement option.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This report sets out the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel's approach to citizen engagement and how it will proactively include young people in the process. The means by which we can ensure that our communities have a voice in shaping the future is considered in this report and the various options by setting up a Citizen's Assembly as a way of also involving residents and businesses in the process.
- 1.2 On 17 July 2019, the Council declared a 'Climate Emergency', committing the Council to reach net carbon zero by 2030. The Climate Emergency Advisory Panel (CEAP) was established with the terms of reference and a high-level work programme agreed by Cabinet March 2020, (CAB150/19), to enable the delivery of the motion to be progress.
- 1.3 That declaration stated:
- 1.4 RESOLVED – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council recognises the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence pointing to man-made climate change and the harmful impacts this is having on natural habitats and ecosystems, biodiversity, and our lives in general. It notes the early work undertaken to date by the Council including efforts to promote active travel, increase recycling and the reduction of plastic usage in the Town Hall but understands it needs to do more. It recognises that it has a responsibility to take a firm lead on reducing the council's and the wider borough's carbon emissions and in furtherance of this responsibility agrees to:
- Declare its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies.
 - Set up a climate cross party task force to start a dedicated report within the fiscal year with actions that it needs to take to address this emergency including how the wider community including businesses, organisations and individuals can be encouraged to make their own contributions to meeting a goal to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2030. This report will include a plan to conduct a green audit of all council services to ensure that weight is given to the environmental and sustainability impact as well as cost and which will inform the next iteration of the Council's five year plan;
 - Ensure that forthcoming plans and strategies (including the Local Plan and the next iteration of the Five-Year Plan) set out ways in which the Council can make its contribution to reduce carbon emissions, the degradation of the environment and combating climate change by agreeing an ambition to make the Council's operations carbon neutral by 2030;
 - Lobby central government to provide additional resources and to grant the necessary freedoms to deliver the above.

- Take steps with partners to proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future by setting up a Citizen’s Assembly as a way of also involving residents and businesses in the process as Climate change will have implications for generations to come.”

What is a Citizens’ Assembly?

- 1.5 A Citizens’ Assembly is a group of people who are brought together (through a process of random selection) to discuss an issue or issues and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen. The people who take part are scientifically selected to reflect the wider population in terms of demographics (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity).
- 1.6 Citizens’ Assemblies give members of the public the time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic before reaching conclusions. Assembly participants are asked to make trade-offs and arrive at workable recommendations.
- 1.7 Citizens’ Assemblies often adopt a three-step process of ‘learning, deliberation and decision-making’. This is supported by a team of impartial facilitators who guide participants through the process, ensuring that everyone is heard and comfortable participating.
- 1.8 The participants learn about a topic through a combination of presentations from experts to cover the breadth of opinion on the issue being addressed (participants can also be provided with additional learning materials that introduce them to the topic being discussed before the Assembly starts). There is also time given for experts to answer questions from participants.
- 1.9 The second phase (deliberation) encourages participants to explore their own opinions on what they have heard and develop a wider understanding of the opinions of others. Experts will usually participate in this phase to provide additional information and clarification (but not opinions).
- 1.10 The final phase (decision-making) of the Assembly involves participants coming to some conclusions on what they have learnt through the assembly process by setting out their perceived priorities. It is important that Citizens’ Assemblies do not manufacture a false sense of consensus; thus, alongside agreed positions, individual voting can be used to collect the views of all participants. This ensures that minority voices are heard as well as the majority.

- 1.11 Citizens' Assemblies are often overseen by an independent Advisory Group (made up of a diverse group of local stakeholders e.g. Council, academics, business, community groups, environmental organisations). They support the preparations for the Citizens' Assembly, including topic selection, process design, and the materials that will be used during the Citizens' Assembly meetings. A key responsibility of this group is to ensure that participants are presented with factually accurate, comprehensive, balanced, and unbiased information.
- 1.12 Citizens' Assemblies usually tend to be one-off high-profile events, usually of a minimum of 30 hours in duration. The relevant decision makers will often be present at the Assembly allowing participants to present their findings directly. They are extremely resource intensive.

What is a Citizens Panel?

- 1.13 An alternative option explored by the CEAP is a Citizens' Panel. It also aims to be a representative, consultative body of local residents. They are typically used by statutory agencies, particularly local authorities and their partners, to identify local priorities and to consult service users and non-users on specific issues.
- 1.14 Participants are generally recruited through random sampling of the electoral roll or postcode address file. Postal recruitment tends to be a popular approach given its wide reach and relatively low cost. However, a number are recruited by other means to ensure recruitment of socially excluded and hard-to-reach groups.
- 1.15 Once citizens agree to participate, they will be invited to a rolling programme of research and consultation. This typically involves regular surveys and, where appropriate, further in-depth research tools, such as focus groups and workshops. Not all members will be invited to take part in all Panel activities.
- 1.16 Citizens' Panels can vary in size. However the main difference between a Citizens Assembly and a Citizens Panel is the size in terms of the number of participants and the duration. It is usually a smaller group and a shorter process. Often Citizens' Panels are established and used for ongoing consultation. They can therefore provide a means of assessing local service needs over time.

What is a Citizens Jury?

- 1.17 Citizens' Juries are another tool for engaging citizens on a range of issues. They are smaller and are relatively inexpensive compared to Citizens' Assemblies or Citizens' Panels. Their small size allows for effective deliberation, but they are sufficiently diverse and citizens are exposed to a wide range of perspectives.

- 1.18 A Citizens' Jury is generally composed of around 12-24 randomly selected citizens (through stratified random sampling) representative of the demographics of the area, who come together to deliberate on a given issue. According to the Jefferson Centre, which designed the method, a Citizens' Jury should take place over 4-7 days. However, most juries are held over 2 days. The description below is based on the timeframe recommended by the Jefferson Centre.
- 1.19 The first day the Jury meets is dedicated to understanding the process that they are about to embark upon. Jurors receive a brief overview of the issue and get comfortable with each other. The next 3 or 4 days are dedicated to hear from the expert witnesses. These should include 'neutral' experts, stakeholders and advocates representing all sides, so that the Jury can receive a balanced and complete picture of the issue.
- 1.20 There is time allotted for the Jurors to ask question of the witnesses and also time for them to deliberate. After all the hearings have been completed the rest of the time is set aside for the Jurors to have final deliberations on the issue and answer the crucial question(s). The final decision is reached by either consensus or voting.
- 1.21 Normally the deliberation phase is not open to the public to ensure Jurors feel comfortable in expressing their opinions without outside pressure. All phases are overseen by one or more trained facilitators who ensures a level playing field. On the final day a public forum is held where the jurors present their findings and recommendations and explain how they reached their decision. About two to three weeks later a final report is issued and made available to the public.

Research by the Climate Emergency Action Panel (CEAP)

- 1.23 The CEAP has researched consultation methods and received presentations from three external companies who have delivered various projects to other organisations. This enabled the Panel to identify the options specified in Part B of this report, including estimated external costs and the internal resources required.

2. Options

- 2.1 The Climate Emergency Advisory Panel have identified that the components across all options available are reasonably consistent with the variables being primarily the number of participants, the duration, the level of expert and external organisation support and event communication /promotion. The options manifest themselves as fundamentally a Citizens' Assembly, Citizens' Panel or Citizens' Jury.

Option A - Citizens Assembly to focus on the whole Borough's approach to carbon reduction

2.2 This comprehensive approach enables a full wide-ranging debate with a large demographically balanced cross section of residents supported by facilitators and expert presentations.

This approach would cover:

- 40 - 75 assembly members
- 30 hours of assembly (either face to face or remote)

2.3 The approach would require us to engage with a provider to develop and support the Assembly and provide independence through:

- Identification and Expert speakers' liaison
- Advisory board input
- Identification and selection of Assembly participants to accurately reflect the demographic composition of the target population
- Design of research materials
- Structure and construct the Assembly including framing and voting questions, prioritisation exercises, breakout, and plenary debates and stimulus materials.
- Chair assembly sessions, provide facilitation team and support staff
- Utilisation of media team to help with contacts and promotion
- Production of summary and final published report.

2.4 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will provide:

- The scope and focus of the assembly – what question are assembly members being tasked with answering?
- Promotion of the Assembly (with support from provider)
- Host microsite for research materials, expert presentations
- Assembly logistics

2.5 This type of event, either face to face or remote, would cost in the region of £80,000 to £100,000 (including incentive payments and compensation to Assembly participants). It would also involve significant officer support in attending the event, communicating with participants, and supporting and facilitating the sessions.

2.6 It is anticipated that the timescale would be in the order of 4-6 months from commission to a draft report on the outcomes.

Option B Citizens Panel – to focus on the whole Borough’s approach to carbon reduction

- 2.7 A number of variables can be adjusted on a sliding scale to create a Citizens’ Panel that will reduce the cost of the event in terms of depth of research and analysis, degree of support for the event members, number of Member participants, duration of event and degree of bringing activities ‘In House’ to be run by Council Officers.
- 2.8 The elements that can be adjusted are:
- Number of participants (minimum 20)
 - Duration of consultation through reduced sessions (minimum 8 hours)
 - Reduced number of experts/presentations
 - Reduced research/stimulus materials
 - Council Officers undertaking more of the Assembly activity (assuming capacity and competency to do so)
- 2.9 The price would be dependent upon the content and approach chosen but could be in the range of £40 - £75k. Whilst this is a less resource-intensive approach it would still need considerable officer support.

Option C –Citizens Jury to focus on the whole Borough’s approach to carbon reduction

- 2.10 A further option as set out previously is to undertake a Citizens’ Jury. This would require expert facilitation (procured through a competitive process) and again internal support from officers.
- 2.11 12 to 24 citizens are selected through stratified random sampling, according to a number of criteria, including gender, age, socio-economic background, and ethnicity. Given the small sample, using too many criteria can prove methodologically problematic.
- 2.12 A Citizens' Jury will cost in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 for two days.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 The report sets out above three options outlined above: a Citizens’ Assembly, a Citizens’ Panel or a Citizens Jury.
- 3.2 Any costs associated with a Citizens’ Assembly or Panel would need to be accompanied with a proposed way of funding them. Given the severe financial issues faced by the Council, external sources of funding should be explored.

4. Preferred Option and Reason

- 4.1 The CEAP do not have an agreed preferred option and the decision is one for Cabinet to make but the CEAP wished the above options to be considered and debated by Full Council to inform that decision.

5. Consultation on Options

- 5.1 The CEAP have debated the options but no public consultation has been undertaken at this stage. The public should be consulted prior to allocating significant Council funds or resources to any of the options set out in this report.

Recommendation from Cabinet Advisory Board

- 5.2 The Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board were consulted on 17 February 2021 and agreed the following:

That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

Recommendation from Cabinet

- 5.3 The Cabinet discussed the report on 11 March 2021 and agreed:
1. That the report from the Climate Emergency Action Panel, and the options for public engagement on climate issues be noted.
 2. That the report from the Climate Emergency Action Panel be forwarded onto Full Council for debate and guidance on the preferred public engagement option be approved.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 Implementation of the preferred option will be overseen by a Project Manager and be subject to standard Project Governance structure and reporting. The first stage of the implementation will involve constructing tender documentation that can then be used to select a provider to support Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in construction and implementation of a Citizens Assembly/Panel/Jury.
- 6.2 As mentioned previously in this report the chosen option would be delivered 4 – 6 months from commissioning an external supplier.

7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- None

Exempt appendices (if any):

- None

Background Papers:

- None

7. Cross Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

The Climate Change Act 2008 originally required the UK to achieve an 80% reduction in green house gas (GHG) levels (below 1990 levels) by 2050.

In June 2019, the *Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 (SI 2019/1056)* revised this target upward, from 80% to 100% which is termed a net zero reduction in GHG levels by 2050. The Order increases the UK's 2050 net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target from 80% to 100%.

Achieving a 'net-zero' target by ~~2050~~ 2030 is ahead of the UK's commitment under the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015 to curb the polluting gases that cause climate change.

The CEAP is making recommendations to Cabinet on the points set out in the Full Council motion from July 2021.

The final decision on the consultation option is one for Cabinet to make. Full Council has responsibility to approve the budget and the strategic policy framework. Options regarding whether to consult through a Citizens' Assembly or other avenues is not a budgetary matter, nor a strategic policy matter. However, Cabinet may seek guidance from Full Council on this matter.

Patricia Narebor, Head of Mid Kent Legal Partnership 8 February 2021

B. Finance and Other Resources

Since the Climate Emergency motion agreed by Full Council the country has entered a National Emergency due to the Covid-19 Pandemic which has resulted in the cost of providing local services exceeding the level of income that can be raised. This has necessitated the temporary use of reserves to meet the additional costs in responding to the pandemic and filling the budget gap from the loss of income. The strain on the council's finances will be felt for some time and the ability of the council to finance new commitments is severely limited.

The Climate Emergency motion agreed by Full Council agreed to; 'lobby central government to provide additional resources and to grant necessary freedoms to deliver the motion'. No such additional funding or freedoms have been received at the time of writing this report.

Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy & Development, 5 February 2021

C. Staffing

The staffing implications are implicit in the report.

Nicky Carter, Head of HR, Customer Services & Culture, 5 February 2021

D. Risk Management

Appropriate measures will be put in place once the preferred option is identified. Climate Change is identified as a Strategic Risk.

Gary Stevenson Head of Housing, Health and Environment 5 February 2021

E. Environment and Sustainability

This report is from the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel. The panel has been supported by a number of officers, including the Sustainability Manager. The proposals to undertake engagement will assist in the development of actions to reduction carbon emissions from the borough.

Gary Stevenson Head of Housing, Health and Environment 5 February 2021

F. Community Safety

There are no community safety implications

Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager, 5 February 2021

G. Equalities

The options put forward ensure that the consultation would inclusive and accessible with a demographical balance as explained in the report.

H. Data Protection

The proposals in the report will involve the collection and processing of personal data. Once the preferred option is identified Data Protection Impact Assessment will be carried out. The data protection control measures of the suppliers will be assessed as part of the contract award process.

Jane Clark Head of Policy and Governance 8 February 2021

I. Health and Safety

There are no Health & Safety issues associated with the report.

Gary Stevenson Head of Housing, Health and Environment 5 February 2021

J. Health and Wellbeing

There are no relevant Health and Wellbeing issues associated with the report

Gary Stevenson Head of Housing, Health and Environment 5 February 2021