

ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

INPUT TO RESIDENTS FORUM – OCTOBER 2019

The Council has been aware of its responsibilities for the environment for a number of years. However, at its AGM in May, it established an Environment Working Group 'to co-ordinate the council's approach to Climate Change'. The group consists of myself, Cllrs Joshi and Kaur from Oadby and Cllrs Boulter and Charlesworth from Wigston and reports to the Service Delivery Committee.

Our role is to understand what practical steps have been taken and are planned by the council officers in response to growing evidence that urgent action is required to respond to global warming and to identify what additional steps should be taken in the future.

The Council has already produced a draft Environment Strategy and Action Plan with short (*12 months*), medium (*3 years*) and long term (*10 years*) goals.

The Strategy and Action Plan seeks to address issues at all levels:

- Global issues, such as climate change – seeking to become carbon neutral
- National issues, more efficient use of resources by decreasing the use of plastics and encouraging reuse and recycling
- Local, improving the quality of the local environment by planting more trees and reducing littering

The document identifies four key themes:

- Reducing Emissions
- Raising Awareness
- Partnership Working
- Volunteering

There are currently 18 objectives;

RE1: Ensuring New Council Buildings are Energy Efficient

This action primarily relates to new build facilities although there may also be some opportunities to retro-fit existing buildings.

RE4: Develop an Energy Performance Certificate Strategy for all Council Housing Properties

Carry out assessment and develop strategy to understand how to achieve long term targets most cost effectively and agree an Energy Investment Plan

RE6: Reducing the Overall Council Carbon Footprint at the Main Council Offices

We will do this by:

- *Ensuring that we are using the most energy efficient equipment.*
- *Reviewing Homeworking policy*

RE3: Ensuring Council Vehicles are Energy Efficient

This action primarily relates to the purchase of new vehicles for the Depot. Consideration will be given to the purchase of those vehicles which have low emissions and improved fuel efficiency. Need to assess feasibility.

RE2: Encouraging Sustainable Transport

This action relates to providing opportunities for the use of sustainable transport and includes the installation of electric car charging points in town centres/car parks refer to partnership bid with other districts.

PW4: Encourage Schools to take up Sustainable Travel Initiatives

RE5: Reduce the Use of Paper and Plastics

We will do this by:

- *Migrating paper processes to an electronic capability through the use of the Electronic Documents and Records Management System*
- *Replacing internal paper transactions and processes with online forms*
- *Introduction of e-billing for both Council Tax and Business Rates.*
- *Making Committees paperless*
- *Reviewing all opportunities to stop or reduce the use of plastics*

RE7: Develop a Procurement Strategy to Maximise Use of Sustainable Materials

RA1: Raising Awareness of Initiatives and Opportunities to Support and Encourage a Cleaner Environment for our Residents

RA2: Raising Awareness of Initiatives and Opportunities to Improve Air Quality

We will install an Air Quality Monitoring Station at Blaby Road/Station Road junction in order to Monitor NOx Levels and Provide Evidence for Declaration of Air Quality Management Area.

RA3: Provide Educational Opportunities Relating to Engaging with Nature

PW5: Formally Designate Brocks Hill Country Park as a Local Natural Reserve

OWBC is working with Natural England to formally designate Brocks Hill Country Park as a Local Natural Reserve. This has many benefits including retaining the countryside and natural open space of the Green Wedge, where Brocks Hill is an essential link.

RA4: Manage our Parks to Protect the Countryside, Preserve the Local Landscape and Nurture Wildlife

PW1: Increase Tree Planting

The primary benefits of trees are that the process greatly contributes to producing the oxygen that we and all other animals need to breathe and sustain life and take up carbon dioxide. It is well documented that trees reduce the amount of storm water runoff, which reduces erosion and pollution in our waterways and may reduce the effects of flooding which are projected to become more intense with the progress of climate change.

PW2: Promote the Leicester Low Carbon Transport Accelerator

Grants are available for the purchase of new Ultra-Low Emission taxi vehicles.

PW3: Manage Flood Planning and Response

VO2: To Increase the Number of Volunteers to Improve the Environment

VO1: Improve the Environmental Quality of the Council's Housing Estates

If you wish to comment on the draft Environment Strategy and Action Plan, please speak to one of the working group. Is there anything missing, which you consider that we should be addressing?

In addition to considering the Policies and Practices of OWBC with the aim of the Council being an exemplar of good practice, we would like to support local initiatives, such as the work by the local Rotary clubs to help the borough achieve Plastic Free Community Status.

As the result of an event about Reducing the Use of Plastics in early August, the Oadby and Wigston Environmental Forum has been formed. It will meet once a term, bringing together individuals and groups with a shared interest in supporting environmental issues with the aim of networking to add value by working together with a complementary and partnership approach.

The first meeting is on Tuesday 29th October; 3.45 – 5.00. Venue to be confirmed.

Due to data protection regulations (GDPR 2018), an email circulation list is being held and administered by Oadby Community Stakeholders. If you wish to be involved please email oadbystakeholders@lionhearttrust.org.uk and request to join. If you choose not to join the mailing list, you may be able to still access information relating to dates and times of meetings via the Oadby and Wigston Environmental Forum Facebook page.