

Reading Climate Change Partnership Board Meeting 13th October 2015

Venue: Offices of Kyocera Document Solutions

Present

Ben Burfoot – Chair – Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Cllr Paul Gittings - RBC
Tracey Rawling-Church – Kyocera Document Solutions Ltd.
Jenny Allen - Peter Brett Associates
Dan Fernbank – University of Reading
John Booth – Greater Reading Environmental Network (GREN)
Summreen Sheikh – Reading Borough Council

Apologies

Sally Coble - EA
Cllr Tony Page - RBC
Chris Rhodes - Transition Reading

Matters arising

Inter Climate Network – Scheduled for the 11th December in Council Chamber. It was hoped that board members would be able to attend. A briefing to include MPs briefing beforehand would depend on the availability of speakers and MPs. Previous attempts to arrange a briefing with MPs had not been successful.

RCAN events

A date of 24th November had been agreed (subsequently postponed). SS to inform JA of new dates for room availability at Peter Brett's offices.

LED streetlight colour – JB to speak to the Council about the possibility of yellower colour LEDs.

Divestment – A response will be made to the Council about divestment of funds from fossil fuels by GREN.

Chair for RCCP board

The Chair of the partnership Sally Coble has stood down. The board need to appoint another chair. It was agreed that a nominations process would be run between this meeting and the next in order to appoint a chair at the next meeting. Consideration of a rolling chair should also be made if no permanent chair is forthcoming. The board also agreed that an offer should be made to the Environment Agency to provide a person to sit on the board.

Proposal to make budget cuts to the Sustainability team by removing the sustainability managers post.

The chair gave an introduction to the proposal that was presented to the board. The proposal was for an alternative approach which would draw in sufficient funds to cover the majority of the costs outlined in the proposal through specific developing work areas. This would allow the Council to reduce the budget of the sustainability team by approximately 2/3rd of the amount proposed for removal of the post. The proposal included three main areas of work. i) Berkshire wide work supporting the EU structural funds projects. ii) Consultancy working for APSE (nationally). iii) Project manage the delivery of the Reading Climate Strategy Action plan.

The latter option would require the permission of the board to allocate £8.5k annually from the partnership's budget to cover the costs of work by the sustainability manager to drive the delivery of the programme. The

proposal also set out a further fee of £6k in 2016/17 for additional resource to manage the delivery of the climate change partnership.

Conclusion of board:

The board felt that the budget proposal lays open the question of the Council's commitment to the partnership.

The board have a great desire for this area to continue and intend to respond to the consultation.

Cllr Gittings explained that there were very difficult decisions to make and this is up alongside closing libraries and buildings such as South Street. He felt that the alternative proposal presented was a good one, however.

The board agreed that a proportion of the budget could be made available for officer support but this should not cover the cost of time spent attending the board or carrying out functions pertaining to this role.

Solar panel updates

Summreen explained that the government's consultation on feed in tariffs had led her to ask RISC to pre-register the RCCP community buildings for them as her timetable of installations would miss the end of year deadline. A loan agreement will need to be made with RISC and the FiT will be returned to RCCP. RISC may be reimbursed for any costs that are incurred by them. The board agreed to a suggestion made by JA that a letter of thanks be sent to RISC for agreeing to work with RCCP on community solar panels.

Renewable energy strategy

Ben explained that RBC have an engineering doctorate who could write a renewable energy strategy for the partnership. By taking him on as an employee of the council, we could get more for the money. It is estimated to be 30 days work, which would cost £5272.

The board felt that the uncertainty of the feed-in-tariff makes this an unsuitable time to write a renewable energy strategy, and could a financial appraisal of different technologies be produced instead. An interim report which would be a short piece of work including case studies of investments. Action - BB to come back to partnership with a proposal.

Grants

Institute of Education – after reviewing the new information that had been provided by IoE, the board agreed to fund this project.

Climate March – concerns around the reputational risk of being involved with a demonstration / publicity stunt were raised. It was agreed to review the publicity and event details and approve portions of the funding as details of the event emerged.

AOB

BB to send TRC updates for her presentation to the Reading Climate Change Partnership.

RBC, Berkshire Energy Pioneers Pre-Registration

The Bishop of Reading has a guided walk in support of climate change on 5th December.

Fossil Free Friday is this Friday (16th October)