

Title of report: Recommendations from Citizens Climate Assembly

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 24 February 2022

Report by: Cabinet member environment and economy

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of the report is to consider the recommendations resulting from the Herefordshire Citizens' Climate Assembly commissioned by the council. The Climate Assembly was established in response to a unanimous vote of Full Council on 12 July 2019. The assembly consisted of a diverse and representative group of residents of Herefordshire representing the demographic make up of the county. They participated in 30 hours of deliberation on the question of 'How should Herefordshire meet the challenges of climate change?', resulting in a series of recommendations for priorities for action for the council and partner organisations.

Recommendation(s)

That cabinet:

- a) Receive and note with thanks the recommendations provided by the Citizens Climate Assembly;
- b) Delegate responsibility to Director Economy & Environment and S151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment to allocate funding from the Climate Reserve to consider next steps and provide recommendations to Cabinet by April 2022;
- c) Provide a progress report to the Citizens Climate Assembly in September 2022.

Alternative options

1. That the recommendations are considered unacceptable and rejected, in full or in part. This is not agreed based on the consideration given to the recommendations through the assembly process. A full assessment of the recommendations will be the next stage in understanding the budget and delivery implications.

Key considerations

2. As an overview Citizens' Assemblies will bring together a minimum of 40 people to deliberate 'tricky' policy issues and identify actions to implement locally. The 'assembly' is statistically representative of the wider local population with people taking part from different perspectives and levels of understanding. Once selected participants heard evidence from 'expert witnesses', they deliberated the issues to be addressed and reached a consensus on the necessary recommendations.
3. It is worth noting that there are minimum standards set for a 'Citizens Assembly' ([Standards for Citizens' Assemblies](#)), with the council following those standards. Impact Consultancy supported the council on the delivery of the assembly with advice from industry experts [Involve](#).
4. Sortition Foundation also supported the assembly by independently selecting participants. This was based on randomly selecting 14,400 addresses across Herefordshire - based on 300 addresses for every one of the needed assembly members. From this invite 520 people signed up as potential assembly members who were then asked to share information (including view of climate change) to ensure representation from which an algorithm was used to reach the final 48 participants. In total 41 attended the assembly meetings. A detailed report of the recruitment process can be found at the following [weblink](#).
5. The key question for the Herefordshire citizens' climate assembly was: "How should Herefordshire meet the challenges of climate change?" The assembly focused on three themes: housing and buildings; transport; land use, food and farming. These themes were designed by an advisory group whose details can be found on the council's citizens climate assembly web page ([web link to citizens assembly advisory group](#)).
6. The Citizens Climate Assembly took place on the following dates and the recordings of expert presentations plus question and answer sessions are available via the council's YouTube channel ([link to citizens assembly recordings](#)):
 - Thursday 13 January (evening)
 - Saturday 15 January (all day)
 - Sunday 16 January (all day)

- Thursday 27 January (evening)
 - Saturday 29 January (all day)
 - Sunday 30 January (all day)
7. The sessions included a range of expertise and experience from a local, national and even international level. This allowed the assembly members to work with their facilitators to form informed recommendations (in appendix one).
 8. The recommendations have been ranked via voting by individual assembly members to generate a prioritised list of recommendations from the assembly as a whole – these are listed in full in appendix 1. The next step for the council will be (a) to work up plans to respond to the recommendations that are relevant to the council; and (b) to work with partner organisations to support them to respond to the assembly’s recommendations. The council’s work on addressing the climate and ecological emergency has well-established partnerships and collaboration activity, so there is existing dialogue between organisations. The council has also established a Climate and Nature Partnership Board which will be a key stakeholder in responding to the assembly and taking the recommendations forward.

Community impact

9. The Citizens’ Climate Assembly is a new venture for the council to actively engage a demographically representative group of residents to support the council’s decision making.
10. This recommendation strongly supports key objectives of the County Plan of: “Protect and Enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live” along with meeting the ambitions of:
 - Minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling
 - Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county
 - Build understanding and support for sustainable living
 - Invest in low carbon projects
 - Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation
 - Seek strong stewardship of the county’s natural resources
 - Protect and enhance the county’s biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards
11. This proposal also delivers a specific recommendation by General Scrutiny Committee’s Climate & Ecological Emergency Review and follows a Full Council resolution on 12 July 2019.

Environmental Impact

12. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors the council shares a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire’s outstanding natural environment.
13. The objective of the citizens climate assembly is to positively engage local residents to support the council to meet its commitments of its declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency which set both organisational and countywide carbon neutrality targets by 2030. The anticipated outcomes will also support the council to deliver the wider environmental policy commitments.
14. The climate assembly will consider key climate change themes and the recommendations and proposed activities will be considered by the council. This will support delivery of the council’s

[environmental policy commitments](#) and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.

- Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions
- Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
- Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
- Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire
- Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
- Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport
- sustainable and active travel options

Equality duty

15. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
16. The citizens climate assembly has brought together a representative group of people from across Herefordshire who have been independently selected based on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, climate concern, urban/ rural mix; and from defined areas of multiple deprivation. Therefore the assembly will support a range of voices from different walks of life to be heard, to contribute to decision making and in turn contribute to democracy. As outlined above assembly members were independently selected based on representation of Herefordshire reflective of age, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, socio-economic background, attitude to climate change and disability.
17. Provision was made for representatives who needed IT support (including if they have never used on-line communication), welfare support and any other form of reasonable adjustment.

Resource implications

18. Council agreed on the 11th February 2022 to allocate the £1.33m of New Home Bonus for 2022/23 to the Climate Reserve.
19. The cost of hosting a citizen's assembly was £70k. This was funded from the corporate services budget.
20. The next stage of the process is to consider the next steps and present recommendations to Cabinet. This recommendations will include the financial implications for capital, revenue or external funding as well as other relevant policy implications. Where recommendations are more relevant to partner delivery this will be identified.

Legal implications

21. The Citizens' Climate Assembly has no decision making powers but will have an advisory function to make recommendations to Cabinet on principles, policies and priorities for action on climate change, to support the council's commitments following the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
22. There is no statutory requirement for the council to form a Citizen's Assembly and there is no legislative underpinning to the Citizen Assembly but their use has been encouraged by the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities as a way to "empower citizens and solve intractable problems. A citizens' assembly brings together a diverse group of the public".

Risk management

23. The following risks have been identified:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
That the recommendations presented by the Citizens Climate Assembly are not achievable and resources not available.	Officers will establish option appraisals for each of the actions, including value for money, impact and viability. To follow established decision making to progress agreed activity.
That all the recommendations fall to Herefordshire Council.	Guidance was given to the assembly that recommendations can fall to partners, and there are good partnerships already established in the areas of climate change.
Expectation of assembly members of delivery and continuing as a group.	Feedback will be given to assembly members on progress on the recommendations; the group will not continue but can signpost how members can be involved and active with the issues.

Consultees

24. If a consultation has been done:
 - The Citizens Climate Assembly itself is based on meaningful and engaging consultation
 - All members briefing session on: 9 December 2021
 - Advisory group to support on the establishment of the programme.
25. A review of the Citizens Climate Assembly will be conducted to inform future learning to inform a decision on future assemblies.
26. Political group consultation comments, including the general point of [welcoming the support assembly members have clearly demonstrated for climate action and many of the local food and active travel recommendations scoring so highly; also produced a wealth of ideas about how we take forward our climate change agenda](#) Specific points:
Point: Query over how were representative selected?

Response: The assembly used randomisation of sampling in recruiting members based on age, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, socio-economic background, attitude to climate change and disability. The Sortition Foundation, who specialise in stratified random sampling, were commissioned to recruit the Herefordshire assembly members, they have produced a report on how it was conducted: https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/herefordshire_climate_2022_report

Point: Request for a priority order of the recommendations and [classify the recommendations in terms of feasibility/practicality and cost.](#)

Response: Appendix one includes all the recommendations in order of voting by the Citizen Climate Assembly. As part of the next steps the council will review the delivery options which would further review achievability, feasibility and cost.

Appendices

A: Recommendations from Citizen Climate Assembly

Background papers

None

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	Sarah Buffrey	Date 11/02/2022
Finance		Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 04/02/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 04/02/2022
Procurement	Mark Cage	Date 03/02/2022
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 03/02/2022

Approved by	Andrew Lovegrove / Claire Ward	Date 16/02/2022
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