

Adapt to the Climate – The District Council’s Approach (15.10.24)

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Intro:

- Local Govt. / CDC important role to play – but we’re small player.
- My goal: lean in to what we can do well...
 - Use powers, focus influence on what will make biggest impact,
 - inc. what others will find hardest.
 - Not necessarily biggest problems if our ability to help is minimal e.g. agriculture & transport (we’re not transport authority).
- Past – CDC’s role
- Present – Wider focus on climate change & carbon reductions across estate / operations
- Future – Support for carbon reductions across district

Past:

- Historically, CDC’s role fairly limited: few stat responsibilities, generally focussed on waste collection, litter enforcement, fly tipping – and maintenance of green spaces w/ emphasis on amenity value.
- Last five years efforts to become more proactive and take broader view to doing more to look at bigger picture, take more of a lead on climate change: declaration of climate emergency, expansion / creation of Environment Panel & employment of new staff – inc. Carbon Reduction Project Manager.
- Focus has been on carbon reduction rather than adaptation: have to start somewhere. (Would have hoped country would have made more progress in this time...)
- We do consider adaptation when we do other work – just haven’t brought it together under an formal ‘Adaptation Strategy’.

Present – Work Doing / In the Pipeline on Adaptation (not Carbon Reduction):

Focus on our strengths, opportunities for funding and making use of permissive powers.

Development of Strategic Wildlife Corridors

- Policy within Local Plan (although Southbourne Neighbourhood Plan also has version).
- Connect natural habitats, allowing wildlife to move and find food and/or mate. Link Chichester Harbour w/ SDNP.
- They also allow movement in response to a changing climate.
- Aim to protect what we have and improve quality of habitat between existing pockets. Primarily for wildlife but also for human enjoyment and appreciation...

Renew sea defences at Selsey

- One of most obvious threats to lives and property (and local economy) is to significant areas of Selsy. Not ‘will be underwater’ but ‘likely to flood’.
- Sea defences beyond end of natural ‘life’. Constant repairs required.
- Coastal Partners plan to design – and then build – scheme.
- Cost would entirely wipe out CDC reserves if we funded alone – and still wouldn’t be enough.
- Inspiration is Southsea.
- Opportunities for habitat creation probably limited...
- Economic regeneration = keep people in homes rather than disruption / dislocation.

Chichester Harbour Investment & Adaptation Plan (CHEAP)

- Collapsing sea defences & coastal squeeze i.e. loss of habitat.
- Env Agency won't allow hard defences – and couldn't afford cost of doing all this way anyway.
- Plan is to balance protection of properties and business with natural coastal 'defence' – allow sea in = more mudflats and saltmarsh. Allow species to adapt.
- Also v. costly – will rely on grant funding at least in part.
- Process to be managed by Coastal Partners / in conjunction w/ Havant BC.

Biodiversity Net Gain inc. Supporting WSCC w/ Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- Through Planning role - new developments have to meet national obligation to provide 10% gain in biodiversity.
- On site if possible, nearby if not and further afield if even that's not possible. Examples: enhancing ancient woodland and creating green roofs, but we could also encourage the creation of wetlands.

River Basin Restoration

- We are funding staffing at Western Sussex Rivers Trust (formerly Arun & Rother Rivers Trust).
- Three projects to encourage nature-based solutions across river basins to improve health of rivers – w/ various knock-on benefits.
 - Rother project most advanced (and where our support has been less instrumental).
 - Two Chalk Stream projects too: Ems and Ham Brook getting off the ground and Lavant in v. early stages.
- Create ponds, reedbeds, remove structures that prevent river meanders, work w/ landowners to consider nature-based solutions.
- Primary focus is health of rivers for flow / water quality and wildlife... but if natural flow can be improved / restored – benefits to flood prevention further downstream.

Grants & Business Support

- Running event later this month to help businesses adapt to changing climate.
- Promoted home insulation programmes.

Emergency Planning

- Work w/ partners – WSCC, Emergency Services, etc.
- Extreme weather plan – business continuity for CDC and other services.
 - Sussex NHS lead on extreme heat/cold responses.
 - WSCC Lead Local Flood Risk Authority.
 - We assist w/ temp. accommodation e.g. if necessary after flooding.
- Environmental Health have role in food safety which could be impacted by extremes of weather.

Future

Just finished consultation on renewal of Climate Emergency Action Plan. Current CEAP more of a focus on emission by CDC... this new one looking more at how to bring down emissions across the District (again, focus on areas we can most influence).

One of the projects we consulted on – stress we have to examine consultation responses before finalising plan – was **giving a greater emphasis to helping the District better cope w/ changing weather patterns.**

To include:

- Consider role of water storage and management – discussions w/ WSCC as Flood Risk Authority...
- Coastal defences and managed realignment schemes – have already talked about.
- Beef up our contribution to multi-agency emergency planning for heatwaves, coastal flooding and surface water flooding.
- Compensatory habitat to offset losses due to hard sea defences (protecting property from sea level rise).
- Pull together adaptation work and advice into one place and signpost individuals and organisations to information on how to adapt to climate change.
- More work through planning to ensure new developments are designed to cope with heavier rainfall due to climate change.
- Consider changes to housing policy to encourage adaptation methods, again, in new developments e.g. improving urban design and tree planting to provide cool areas.
- These last two could potentially be taken forward in a 'Supplementary Planning Document' to give more detailed guidance to developers and designers. But stress this is focussed on new build rather than existing settlement.
 - Are dependent on what happens w/ Local Plan – currently at examination...

Housing Decarbonisation

- Proposal is part of decarb strategy but could be considered adaptation as better insulated houses use less energy = cheaper to run and more comfortable for inhabitants.
- Reliant on govt. grants.
- Better targeting of activity and engagement with those potentially interested in taking opportunities.
- More expensive version would expand scope of home energy improvement work to less needy households.

Conclusion

- As society, organisations and individuals huge change is required.
- Hope this outline of CDC thinking on adaptation inc. emphasis on areas we can maximise impact – helps explain what we are doing and why we are doing it.