

Leek Town Council Climate Change Committee Report

There have been no formal meetings of the committee over the period of the corona virus crisis. However, I did convene an informal, "virtual", zoom meeting of some members of the committee on Thursday 16th July to discuss issues. I apologise unreservedly to Council members who may feel this was bad practice and that they had been "left out" in any way – my intention was simply to gather some ideas on the way forward to be put to Council for their further discussion and approval.

One of the items discussed was the way that over the last four months Leek Town Council has been supporting the work of a project which aims to produce fruit and vegetables in an environmentally friendly way for people in food poverty. The project – Gift Garden - is based on an allotment plot at Beggars Lane offered by the Council. Although the coronavirus crisis delayed the start, Ruby Sufi, the project leader, was able to report that work on the plot has progressed sufficiently to enable some initial food donations to Leek and District Foodbank while developing the growing beds and compost areas. Allotment neighbours have shown a real enthusiasm for the project including a deep compassion and generosity. Ruby now hopes that the Gift Garden will become a centre for other allotment keepers to donate a little of their produce to local people in food poverty. Before further promoting the project on site, Ruby is now in the process of identifying and establishing partners; firm routes for the produce based on a geographical priority system beginning with Leek and District Foodbanks and including projects for homeless people and other organisations. Ruby hopes that if there is surplus fresh produce available locally, Gift Garden could offer a regular pick-up/drop-off service for allotment keepers in addition to growing at the plot. Over the next 12 months Ruby will be continuing to develop the plot within an agroecology framework: creating a pond, getting the weather station up and running, growing fresh food and giving it to people who need it most. It was the view of the members present that this was a very worthwhile project that should continue to receive the support of the Council.

The SMDC report from the Portfolio Holder for climate change was also discussed. Issues that could be addressed via the Town Council were change of energy supplier – maybe Town Council could enquire about this, also Town Councils supplier for Bank House should be questioned. It was suggested we formulate 3 achievable objectives, with an opportunity to collaborate with the other Town Councils, SMDC and County Council if applicable, e.g. wildflower growth, tree planting. It was suggested that we establish the land the Town Council owned, to potentially utilise these spaces.

It was reported that a question on EPC ratings had been posed to SMDC and this could be explored at Town level. Feedback from the Moorlands Climate Action group meeting focussed on the SMDC Climate Change report. It was noted that a lack promised action re Brough Park had resulted in a missed season of tree planting. Discussion had taken place with County Councillor Atkins local cycle routes linking Leek to Cheddleton.

Towards the end of the meeting for personal reasons I asked to be allowed to step down as Chair of this Committee. It was agreed that it be put to the next General Purposes meeting that Cllr Cawley take over the Chair. It was agreed to meet again more formally in late August.

Richard Benefer