

# LEEK TOWN COUNCIL CLIMATE GROUP

## DRAFT MINUTES

**Date:** Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October

**Time:** 2PM, Foxlowe

**Chair:** Cllr Bill Cawley

### In Attendance

Cllrs Bill Cawley (Chair), Cllr Richard Benefer, Cllr Sue Coleman, Cllr Joe Porter (SMDC Cabinet Member for Climate and Biodiversity, Sharon Chauveau, Paul Chauveau, Mark Johnson (Vice Chair), Mike Jones, Alison McCrea, Jane Tattersall.

### Apologies

Cllrs Lyn and Matt Swindlehurst.

### Approval of Minutes

Previous minutes approved. Was recorded from **Cllr Lyn Swindlehurst** that reply from Cllr Tony Holmes to email re co-operation with Parish Assembly (sent 11/08/22) was still pending. **Cllr Porter** said he would follow up.

## 1. Co-operation Between Leek Town Council and SMDC

**Cllr Porter** outlined SMDC approach to tree planting this winter. So far 23 Community Orchards – some very successful, a few less so (typically where communities were not involved and where AES had been less diligent).

This season SMDC would not plant without prior written buy-in for ongoing care and maintenance from community groups and/or town councils. Was seeking that commitment for existing community orchard sites in Leek as well as for future sites.

While community orchards were still on the table, there would be more of an emphasis on native tree planting this season. Where the land was SMDC-owned, a full 100% of the costs of trees and planting would be met; where not SDMC the funding would be 50% of cost. Schools and their associated nature/environment groups and other youth groups were a particular target this year.

**Members of the group** welcomed the general approach of cooperation between district, town and community groups, confirmed that they were, of course, keen to be partners where practicable, but a number of potential issues were raised. These are grouped as follows. 1. Even with the better level of co-operation on offer, the most successful examples tend to be those that emerge from the ground up, such as Biddulph Moor, Dane Valley (led by Dane Valley Climate Action), or the Manifold Valley project led by MCA members and villagers. 2. These community groups are typically themselves resource-stretched, often heavily involved in other projects such as those involving Staffs Wildlife Trust; they are not usually in a position to take on new projects they have not themselves generated, particularly those involving heavy and regular tasks such as early orchard maintenance, more typically the responsibility of contractors with heavy equipment. 3. Orchards themselves may not, in fact, be the best approach in all circumstances.

**JT** highlighted that she had already conducted inspection and remedial work on a couple of SMDC community orchards in Leek, but this had been on an urgent, ad hoc basis.

**All** agreed that scout and guide groups might be a useful way forward. MCA have already begun to explore possibilities in this area and Cllr Porter pointed to the example of Cheadle. **SC** highlighted the role that probationers can play (see below) and said she would exchange contacts with Cllr Porter.

**Group members** agreed to relook at sites already identified in the Green Infrastructure Map for Leek for opportunities as well as any others in their locality. They would also use their contacts with community groups and schools to explore the possibility of these taking responsibility for specific planting.

**JT** highlighted the example of the Kiln Lane/bottom of Belle Vue site as what can be achieved by detailed co-operation between SMDC, community groups and other relevant agencies. She cautioned that the time-intensive nature of these projects meant they were difficult to replicate in numbers.

One Ash tree on the Kiln Lane site is suffering from dieback and needs to be felled before seeding can begin. **Cllr Porter** said he would contact Stave Massey.

**MJH** highlighted the continuing attempts to improve the information flow on management responsibilities for verges and open spaces between different levels of authority and agency. The importance of signage and good public information on how spaces were being managed, and why, was emphasised by a number of group members.

## Planting at Pickwood

**SC** and **PC** outlined the status of their planting/open space enhancement project at the 'village green' land immediately west of Pickwood Hall. 100 saplings have been sourced from the Woodland Trust, preparatory clearing work is underway, and training will be available from an experienced woodland ranger.

The area is being fenced for summer grazing (with public access gates) and planting will begin by late March at the latest.

A long-term relationship with the Probation Service has provided much of the manpower; relationships with schools and other groups such as Forest Schools ensure widespread enjoyment of the benefits.

Group members applauded the scheme and its management. **Cllr Porter** said he would endeavour to visit.

## Leek Bee Town sculpture

**Cllr Cawley** reported that the Bee Town sculpture project was on track for March; full funding was in place; insurance issues had been dealt with and Anthony Hammond was sourcing the wood.

Some questions were asked about its location in Birches Garden and not, say, Brough Park or John Hall Gardens. **Cllr Cawley** explained that it was specially intended to be placed in a part of town that had received less attention until now.

## Allotments

**Cllr Coleman** reported that notices had been sent out to those allotment holders who seemed to be no longer using their sites. The town still has a long waiting list for sites.

It was agreed that **AM** would provide the content for a Nature-friendly gardening leaflet to be sent out by the Town Clerk in the December issue of the allotments newsletter.

## Climate in Planning Decisions

**Cllr Cawley** pointed out that when planning decisions affecting the Town came before the council for their input to final decision, there was rarely, if ever, any guidance as to how an application might or might not align to SMDC's climate plan. While it was agreed that the Town itself did not have a specific mandate or target in this regard, this would prove helpful, particularly for any major applications.

**Cllr Porter** replied that planning fell under Cllr Robert's responsibilities. **MJH** reminded him of an informal commitment made this summer to at least raise the possibility of specific input from the climate and biodiversity officer in major planning decisions.

**MJ** pointed to the example of the "Top Field" just north-east of Leek High School being allocated for housing in the Local Plan, yet featuring as a 'Green Corridor' in the Leek Biodiversity Opportunities Map produced by SDMC and SWT. Cllr Porter invited **MJ** to write to him on this issue.

ENDS

