

## Climate Change Forum

### Minutes of Meeting 29 October 2024

1. The Chair welcomed Forum members and noted apologies.

1.1. Attendees list is provided in the Annex below.

## 2. Actions from previous meeting.

Person responsible	Action	Status / outcome
JB	Share flier for Plaxtol and Shipbourne 'Burning Issue' energy event	complete
CS	Upload annual climate change reports and circulate the links after the 5-day call-in	complete
CS	Check that SB could promote the thermal imaging camera loan scheme through KALC	complete
CS	Gardens to help tackle local flooding - look into grey water harvesting options	Not started (carry forward)
CS	Gardens to help tackle local flooding - develop a CCF leaflet and supporting online materials	Not started (carry forward)
All	Suggestions welcome for new faith sector representative in the Borough	Complete

## 3. Roundtable updates from representatives

Climate Action Shipbourne and Plaxtol (CASP) energy workshop.

- 3.1. JB introduced Climate Action Shipbourne and Plaxtol (CASP) est. 2023. CASP has previously attended village events, but in September 2024 organised its own 'The Burning Issue' event about how to move away from using oil for heating homes in Plaxtol and Shipbourne, which are not on the gas grid. The carbon impact from using oil for heating is much higher than average emissions from heating.
- 3.2. The CASP event was funded completely by a grant from the TMBC Community Development Fund, which paid for banners, publicity materials, and so on. The event began with actions that each household could take, with

presentations from solar, battery, and heat pump installers, and information about energy efficiency. The second half was about what we can do if we band together through community action, and had roundtable discussions and presentations from Steve McNab experience about setting up arrays and Ollie Pendered from Community Energy South. There was good attendance and participation, with around 80 people at the event.

- 3.3. Chair responded that this was very good event, excellent speakers and great example that demonstrates what can be done. It is important to share as an example for other communities and small villages interested in taking action as well. TMBC is also in touch with Community Energy South to look into developing a pathway to increasing community energy action.
- 3.4. JB added that Community Energy South have a lot of experience and information about what communities have managed to do, and the extra funding from UK Power Networks to support communities with energy advice, community action or putting on events. Contact with Community Energy South, and other organisations, has led to CASP developing an application for the Community Energy Fund. This application is for £40k funding to engage 3 sets of consultants to inform how to address costs and barriers to community energy in Plaxtol and Shipbourne.

**Action all: please get in touch with CS or JB if your community is interested in further information or contact with Community Energy South.**

- 3.5. SB thanked JB for such a great event, and agreed that need to make the Parishes aware of this example through JB and RB attending the November Parish Partnership Panel (PPP). Chair agreed that this was a best-practice story to share through the PPP to support future events with communities. JB agreed that others can learn a lot from the work CASP have done, and make the most of experts like Community Energy South. Other communities can learn from this and make progress with support from experienced professionals, and don't have to do it all themselves.

**Action: RB and SB to ring around to ensure good attendance for next PPP.**

- 3.6. The Chair asked how CASP advertised and secured good attendance at the event. JB explained that both Plaxtol and Shipbourne have a physical newsletter that goes to every household. The event was trailed 3 months before it took place (look out for it; then a bit more information; then the detail). CASP also leafletted a lot of houses in the village, and got fliers up; SB circulated information to other Parishes, with a few attendees from other villages on the day. There were lots of expressions of interest from people who couldn't come. The success was probably because the event was not just generally about climate change, but honed in on the key issue of heating oil that is effecting and worrying people in those villages.
- 3.7. The Chair suggested that this approach could be followed by other communities for future events, and that there could be generic banners,

posters, etc. that could be used by other areas for their events (passed to next workshop to save materials, costs). Could tailor with own logo or event title for fliers, adverts to support people wanting to set up events.

**Action: JB to send through examples of the banners and materials.**

**Action: CCF to support and share to help other groups to start.**

3.8. AO asked about the event time and demographics? JB explained the event was on a Saturday morning 9.30 – 1.30pm. It was a packed programme, but could have been longer. About a third of people went home at the break after first few sessions. Demographics were older homeowners in the villages and it is harder for families to come along on the weekends. But all households facing similar issues financially with taking action. The two major barriers raised at the event are funding and understanding the technologies and knowing what is best for individual properties.

3.11 TS asked if there are any grants for solar panels on village halls? The Chair informed the group that the last of the West Kent Rural Grants has now been allocated, and Green Business Grants and Community Development Grant funds are now also ended. Following the general election, it is not clear what grants might be coming through next year but the group will be kept updated, along with the Parish Partnership Panel (PPP) and Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) through SB. SC noted that Hadlow Village Hall might be able to help make the case that it is worth investing own money as solar panels are generating revenue and have a quick payback.

Thermal imaging camera loan scheme

3.12 CS introduced the thermal imaging camera loan scheme that was introduced following discussion at the last CCF meeting. The scheme has proved very popular, and was fully booked out for the winter season (when the camera works best due to temperature differences) within a week of opening. Everyone who applied for the scheme has been notified of either a booking or a place on the waiting list. Information on how to use the camera, understand the images, and download the app to generate reports is available for people using the scheme.

3.13 AO noted a complaint that people don't like being put on a waiting list. SB also raised queries from Parishes about how to get information about home improvements; that the camera can't be used in the summer; and that the screen is too small. CS explained that the booking form includes a box to tick to consent for TMBC to follow up on energy efficiency improvements after using the camera, and that will be done over the summer months. The camera was chosen to balance costs and functionality. For residents on the waiting list in West Malling, the Parish council have the camera on loan in January, so

will be able to support residents in the Parish at that time. Feel free to contact CS to put in touch.

- 3.14 The Chair noted very positive take up of the scheme, which is new so TMBC is taking on board all the feedback and seeing how to get the most of the investment, and support more people through the camera loans going forward. JB noted it might be worth talking to Community Energy South about funding for another camera.

**Action: CS to follow up with Community Energy South.**

#### **4 Healthy, sustainable lifestyles (local, seasonal food)**

- 4.1 SC introduced this item in the context of the negative impacts of climate change now being experienced and science pointing to further action. SC proposed that TMBC and/or CCF could disseminate leaflets to urge local action. For example, there is an Al Gore leaflet that sets out simple actions, starting with: Get informed – climate emergency; Speak up – talk to people; Attend action events; Save energy at home; Bank account that doesn't support fossil fuel; reduce waste, reuse, repair (e.g. sustainable fashion); use car less; take less flights (once every 3 years); eat the food you buy and use local produce. On this last point, there is increasing awareness of chemicals and processed foods on the health of children and others. Similar to a campaign with community energy, there needs to be a campaign to raise awareness and encourage locally produced, less processed food, potentially linking in with farmer's markets. Could also work with local leisure centres, e.g. Tonbridge Swimming Pool, to see if might be possible to encourage locally produced, reasonably priced food.
- 4.2 The Chair added that supermarkets are leading the charge on shaping customer perceptions by making all produce available at any time of the year. For example, does the customer really want a strawberry in the middle of winter? Supermarkets need to make the switch to seasonal produce to support customers choosing fruit and veg in a seasonal way, with information about environmental impacts, e.g. food miles and carbon emissions. The question is how can CCF make a difference to promote local seasonal food?
- 4.3 The Chair suggested that TMBC could support through comms, such as a small graphic on the website about what foods are in season that changes each month. AO suggested that if there is a space on the TMBC website that advertises all the farmers markets, this could include what food is in season. JB noted that some local Parish newsletters mention seasonal food, so that could be taken up by others. Supermarkets now sell 'ugly' vegetables that are cheaper, but usually in plastic bags.

- 4.4 FL agreed that there has been progress in supermarkets now selling loose vegetables, which means that less plastic is used, and that is less wasteful as can buy one or two rather than a whole box. The consumer is on board as supermarkets run out of the loose veg, and the packaged veg are the only ones left. FL suggested that the Chair and CCF write to local stores (e.g. Sainsbury's) about seasonal, loose vegetable, that can have an impact when comes from local councillors.
- 4.5 FL also noted that litter picking gets loads of cans, so there could be a deposit return scheme bank at supermarkets. This could be added to the letter to supermarkets.
- 4.6 AB gave an example of volunteer fruit picking to avoid apples on the ground rotting, and instead provided fruit in cardboard boxes to food banks, church and so on. Great example of what could have been wasted being put to good use.

**Action: RB happy to write with CCF on packaging, plastic, and seasonal eating and ask local supermarkets to endorse these ideas.**

## **5 Future agenda items & next meeting.**

- 5.1 Home energy advice and retrofit. TS may wish to raise from email discussion. CS could update on Community Energy South support in the borough. The Chair or KT could update on how Clarion are taking forward retrofit work (Clarion to be invited).
- 5.2 Sustainable local food – discussion to continue.
- 5.3 Next meeting will take place in January. SB encouraged getting date in diary well in advance.

## **6 AOB**

- 6.1 SB made the group aware that the Making Space for Nature Kent and Medway (<https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk/>) final consultation will launch in January. This will form the basis of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with implications for Planning and biodiversity recovery.
- 6.2 All to note that climate change has now been added to the 'Services' menu on the TMBC website. That means you can now access the climate change pages without having to use the search function, as follows on [tmbc.gov.uk](https://tmbc.gov.uk):



7 The meeting closed.

## **Annex: Attendees to 29 October 2024 meeting**

### Attendees

Cllr Robin Betts (Chair)  
Cllr Steve Crisp (Cllr Crisp)  
Cllr Anita Oakley (Cllr Oakley)  
Cllr Kim Tanner (KT)  
Carrie Spencer (CS)  
Dr Tom Shelley (TS)  
Jennifer Bates (JB)  
Anthony Bales (AB)  
Fran Long (FL)  
Sarah Barker (KALC)

### Apologies

Cllr Frani Hoskins (FH)  
Cllr Paul Hickmott  
Cllr Mike Taylor (MT)  
Gill Fox (GF)  
Helen Longley (Faith sector)  
Katie Traylen (KTr)  
Derek Whitehead (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership)  
Chris Lydon (Education representative)  
Mario Caccamo (East Malling Research)  
Tudor Price (Kent Chamber of Commerce)  
Guy Nevill (Local Landowners)  
Sophie Worsfold (SW)