



WEAct

Woking Environment **Action**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Driving Climate Action in Woking



Tonight's presentation...

1. Who are Woking Environment Action (WEAct)?
1. Why it matters – a global crisis under a local lens.
1. What can Woking Borough Council do?
4. The role of community climate action.
5. Recommendations for discussion.



Who are Woking Environment Action?

- Formed in 1994, a group of volunteers to tackle global environmental concerns on a local scale.
- Encourage sustainable living and working in Woking through spreading awareness and carrying out projects.
- Growing supporter base with over 60 attendees at our recent AGM. Our numbers and impact is growing...



Our Projects

- **Climate Action Group**
- Woking Biodiversity Group
- WEAct Hub
- Woking Hedgehogs
- Operation Owl
- Plastic Free Woking
- Young People
- Incredible Edible



Climate Action Group

Our Purpose

To drive climate action in Woking by:

- **Working with Woking Borough Council, scrutinising the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and acting as a critical friend to support its delivery.**
- Engaging with the local community, building climate awareness and encouraging action to support the delivery of the CEAP.



Why it matters – a global crisis under a local lens



Key climate risks in the South East

- **Business** – loss of productivity due to overheating; impacts on business continuity due to flooding events.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – disruption to schools, health and social care systems due to flooding, heatwaves and storms. Excess deaths from overheating.
- **Buildings and Infrastructure** – increased disruption – given that even minor incidents test the capacity of our infrastructure today.
- **Agriculture and forestry** – woodlands under stress, due to lack of water, pests and diseases.





**The impact
of climate
change can
already be
felt in
Woking**



What can Woking Borough Council do?



Woking Borough Council have declared a climate emergency aligned to the national 2050 target, as well as committing to a 2030 carbon neutral target for the council's own activities.

- Action needs to match the ambition.
- We welcome the commissioning and publication of the Carbon Footprint Assessment (Anthesis) report looking at emissions directly under council control (scope 1 and 2).
- We support the recommendation that Woking Borough Council should:
 - *Focus on demand reduction and decarbonisation of the largest sites that will have the biggest carbon reduction impact; sustainable procurement policy improvements; and organisation-wide staff training.*
- **What role can the Overview and Scrutiny Committee play in ensuring these recommendations are acted upon?**



What can Woking Borough Council do?

- We recognise the financial pressure the council is under and that not all policy areas under WBC control.
- However, investment in climate action brings significant co-benefits. And the cost of in-action is greater.
- WEAct recommends that more focus is put on reducing emissions across the Borough - Commercial, Domestic and Transport
- **Work with partners to ensure clear plan and targets in place to show how this will be achieved**

*“net zero is the
economic opportunity
of the 21st century”
Skidmore Review, Jan 2023*



What can Woking Borough Council do?

- **WEAct recommends that WBC should join UK 100 – to pool knowledge, resources and ideas with other ambitious councils.**
- UK100 is a network of local leaders who have pledged to lead a rapid transition to Net Zero in their communities ahead of the government's legal target.
- Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council are already members of UK100.



The role of Community Climate Action

- Anthesis report looks at only Scope 1 and 2 emissions (the emissions directly under council control)
- However, these account for only a small (3%) proportion of emissions in the Woking area.
- WEAct believe that **WBC has a critical leadership role to engage and encourage the wider community** (residents and businesses) to take action to achieve the 2050 net zero targets (and ideally UK100 target of 2045).
- **How can WBC unlock the power of community climate action?**





Community Climate Action Case Study: WEAct Hub



- Opened in June 2022.
- Over 1600 visitors.
- Over 270 new members.
- Inspired by 'Take the Jump'
- Project currently on pause – but looking to come back bigger and better.....
- **Key message: most people have a strong desire to do 'something' but want support & to feel part of wider movement**



Unlocking the power of community climate action...



Recommendations for consideration

- **That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays a key role in driving climate action in Woking.**
- For example by:
- Ensuring that WBC remains a high ambition council on climate action.
- Ensuring that the recommendations of the Anthesis report are actioned through a strengthened Climate Action Plan.
- Endorsing our recommendation that WBC joins UK100.
- Scrutinising whether WBC's net-zero ambition is understood and embedded across the organisation.
- Encouraging the council to play a stronger leadership role in encouraging community climate action.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee this evening.

