SUSTAINABLE OVERTON

OUR EXPERIENCE SETTING UP A CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

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FIRST STEPS

- Parish Council declared a **climate emergency**: sends a strong message of intent to the local community
- Need a **leader** and a steering committee or similar to drive this forward
- Build your team: **call for volunteers** – of any age, any experience, regardless of how much time they have – inclusive, diverse, everyone has something to offer

BE MINDFUL OF BARRIERS

Parish Councils:

- Busy dealing with new developments, planning and other parish matter, volunteers, often working full time
- Realise it's a long-term ongoing commitment – so you need to be seen to be delivering something regularly – what does that look like?

Councils and residents:

- May have little or no experience or knowledge in this area
- It's a big and complex issue – where do you start?

WHERE MIGHT YOUR VOLUNTEERS COME FROM?

Retired residents

Parish councillors

New to the area

Parents at home with young kids/babies

Local groups: church/WI/mens sheds/trustees /U3A etc

People already active in this area

Working parents

School/college green club

HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING

- **Location:** Local community centre/hall
- **Advertise:** noticeboards/newsletters/website/social media, signs, word of mouth, networks
- You can ask for any specific skills e.g. social media, website design, project management, energy/utilities/renewables, admin, people skills, or just some enthusiasm is fine – we want people to play to their strengths and do things that interest them
- Plan the meeting really well – welcome committee, interesting short presentation, breakout groups, refreshments etc

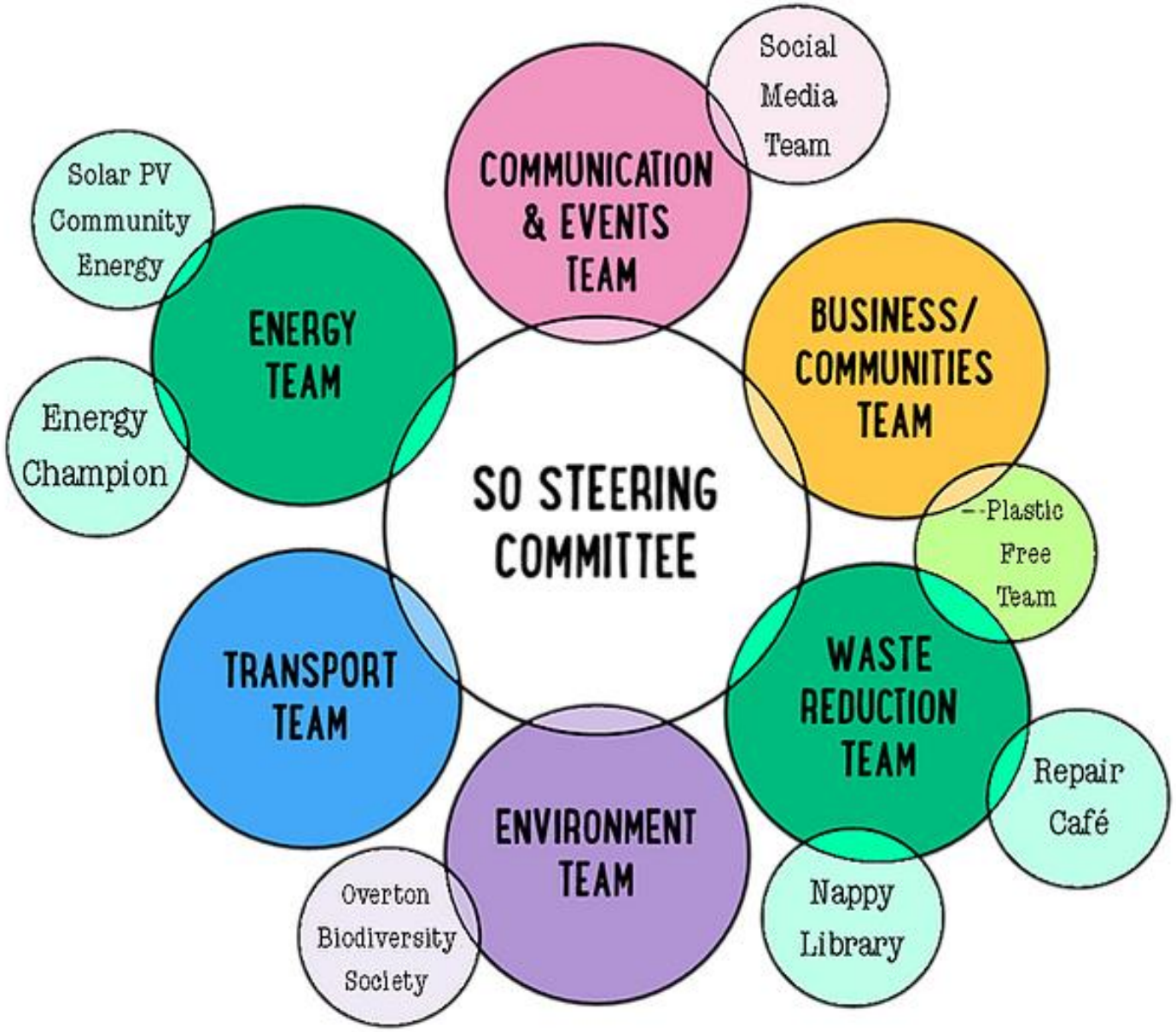
DESIRED OUTCOME OF MEETING

- To get a group of enthusiastic volunteers on board
- For people to feel welcome and to get to know each other
- Decide how you want to run it – short presentation/discussion?
- Welcome all attendees – collect names and contact details
- A small enough group to do round the table introductions, saying who they are, what they have to offer, what they are interested in doing?
- We put up signs for each group around the room – energy, transport, waste reduction, environment and comms/marketing, and asked people to go to their area of interest
- Groups can set their own objectives and these form the first year's plan

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR "BRAND" TO BE LIKE?

- Did an email "poll" to agree the name – Sustainable Overton
- Agree scope of group, shared objectives and values, and how we want to treat each other
- We agreed we wanted to be positive and upbeat, no sludgy green and brown colours, no patronising or critical voice, no blaming, make it clear we are just ordinary people doing our best, not experts, bit of appropriate humour/playfulness, that although this is a serious issue, this should be fun to do, inclusive and open

HOW THE TEAM EVOLVED



ADMINISTRATION

- Set up drop box to share files
- Each team agreed to meet every month at first, with and agenda and follow up with minutes/action list (respect people's time)
- WhatsApp groups really useful for each team
- A representative from each group met every month (not every 2 months) at a steering committee to drive projects forward and report back on progress

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- We try to have something happening every month

JAN	Green New Year resolutions Meat free Mondays and Veggie Wednesdays	JUL	Plastic Free July Repair cafe
FEB	Plastic free champions	AUG	Cycle to work day National Allotments week
MAR	Food waste week LItterpicking – adopt a street	SEPT	Green week Organic September bike to school week
APR	Green spring cleaning Composting	OCT	Energy champions Unblocktober
MAY	walk to school week No Mow May Green market?	NOV	Tree planting
JUN	Clean Air day Refill day Let it bloom June	DEC	Green Christmas

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOURSELVES

- You don’t have to reinvent the wheel
- Use or make relevant contacts – e.g. other parishes, groups, lots of information on the internet etc
- See what other groups have done and learn from them – email/call them
- Focus on easy wins/simple actions people can take
- Recognise what you can and cannot influence/change
- Everyone making a few simple changes is better than a handful or “perfect” people with a low carbon footprint

VOLUNTEER CARE/BURNOUT

- Important to look after your volunteers
- Regular comms/meeting/chats/pub/café
- Accept there will be frustrations and setbacks, and different personalities – disagreements/misunderstandings
- It’s OK to take a break/step back for any reason
- Make people feel they belong, and that they have a contribution to make
- Keep recruiting so that no-one is overloaded
- Be realistic about how many projects you can run
- It needs to be fun

KEY LEARNING

- It’s OK if you don’t understand every single aspect of climate change - you can learn
- Educate yourselves – little by little – share links/information
- People generally want 2 things: make it easy and save me money – good focus for messages.
- You don’t need a budget – there are grants and funding out there
- Keep open-minded and flexible in your approach
- Don’t forget to photograph/video of any activities for social media
- Do not underestimate the power of what a small group of committed people can achieve!

WE INSPIRE AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER

"I CANNOT OVERSTATE THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY ON A MISSION."

SO VOLUNTEER, 2020.

Breakout groups: could be:

Energy- SolarPV/insulation

Transport – active transport, EV’s etc

Environment: biodiversity, tree planting etc

Waste reduction: food waste, nappy library, recycling, repair