

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JANUARY 2020 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON, OX14
4SB

Present:

Ian White (Chairman)
Mocky Khan, Anna Badcock, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Alexandrine Kantor
and Anne-Marie Simpson

Apologies:

George Levy tendered apologies.

Officers:

Steven Corrigan, Liz Hayden, Simon Hill, Ian Matten, Adrianna Partridge and
Michelle Wells

Carmen Cubillas Martinez and Jason Sherwood – Oxfordshire County Council

Also present:

Councillor David Rouane – Cabinet member for housing and environment

Councillor Sue Cooper and Jane Murphy

29 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2019 as a
correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

30 Declarations of interest

None.

31 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.



Listening Learning Leading

32 Public participation

The Chairman advised that Gill Bindoff, Chair of the Watlington's Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Board, had registered to address the committee on the air quality item on behalf of Watlington Parish Council.

33 Air quality

A correction to the table, set out in paragraph 18 of the report, was circulated at the meeting and is attached to these minutes.

Gill Bindoff addressed the committee. She referred to a letter from Watlington Parish Council, circulated to all committee members, which drew attention to aspects of air quality which the parish council considered were not covered in the report before committee and raised concerns about how the district council managed air quality. Her viewpoints were as follows:

- The update provides an optimistic picture of air quality in South Oxfordshire not justified by the facts.
- Evidence suggests there remains a problem with air quality in the designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and that the health of those communities is still under threat.
- There is no pattern of falling levels of pollution in the AQMAs to indicate that nitrogen dioxide levels are reducing over time or that the AQMAs could be revoked.
- The reliability of the 2018 data, which show a dramatic decline in pollution levels since 2017, with no explanation for this.
- Insufficient care is being taken in respect of the Watlington AQMA – the district council should be taking a precautionary approach to the identified risk to ensure decisions are not taken which could increase harm to residents.
- There is a mismatch between the responsibility to reduce air pollution and the demands of housing growth.
- Greater collaboration required between the district council and Oxfordshire County Council.
- A standalone committee/working party should take on responsibility for air quality.
- Would welcome an opportunity for the parish council to meet with officers to address air quality issues.

Councillor David Rouane, Cabinet member for housing and environment, addressed the committee. He stated that the committee had requested an update report on air quality in South Oxfordshire and in particular the progress made at delivering the actions identified in the Air Quality Action Plan adopted in 2014.

He reported that as a largely rural district, with several market towns and villages, the air quality throughout the district is generally very good. However, there are air pollution hotspots where NO₂ associated with traffic emissions is higher and where it has been necessary to declare Air Quality Management Areas.

Under the Environment Act the council is required to periodically review and assess air quality within the district area under the system of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM). This review and assessment of air quality involves considering present and future air

quality levels against the national Air Quality Objectives defined by the department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

If it is predicted that levels at sensitive locations, where members of the public are regularly present for the relevant averaging period, are likely to be exceeded, the Local Authority is required to declare an Air Quality Management Area. Three such areas exist in South Oxfordshire, in Henley on Thames, Wallingford and Watlington, all declared because NO₂ levels were either predicted to or were exceeding national objectives. There were no plans to declassify their status.

Following the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area the Local Authority is required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan. South Oxfordshire District Council's Plan, adopted in 2014, is the document that sets out the actions proposed or taken to combat and mitigate air quality issues within the district. The report sets out progress to date against the actions within the Air Quality Action Plan.

In response to questions the following points were made by the Cabinet member and officers:

- Actions taken forward included the installation of four electric vehicle charging points, a 'Turn it Off' anti-idling campaign, scoping work to improve the use of enforcement and traffic regulation orders via for civil parking enforcement and reduced taxi licensing fees for low emission vehicles.
- The improvement in air quality reflected a long term trend of cleaner cars and vehicle fleets meeting the latest Euro VI emission standard and not a reduction in traffic levels.
- It is difficult to assess how specific measures by the district council had improved air quality. It is a combination of all the measures that leads to local air quality improvements.
- Third parties working in partnership with the council include Oxfordshire County Council, which had responsibility for traffic management, bus companies, taxi drivers and contractors, for example the council's waste contractor Biffa.
- The council's Air Quality Action Plan and Low Emission Strategy feed into the Planning Policy teams work and informs their strategic planning decisions.
- The air quality action plan would be refreshed having regard to the new corporate plan and the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's plans. This was likely to commence in the autumn 2020.
- Addressing air quality in old towns was difficult due to the historic layout of buildings and narrow streets ('canyon effect' trapping pollution).
- Oxfordshire County Council was, via its innovation hub, seeking new ways to manage the flow of traffic.
- Once received, the report setting out Oxfordshire County Council's view on the Low Emission Strategy proposed measures to address air quality in Wallingford (peak times Bridge closure) will be circulated to committee members.
- Officers would circulate details of Oxfordshire County Council's online reporting tool for members of the public to report HGVs exceeding the weight limit on roads.

The view was expressed that the current actions did not include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), a benchmark of success or a timeline for delivery. It was currently difficult to ascertain the impact of the actions implemented and any improvement on people's lives. Tough decisions were required to make improvements.

The committee noted the work being undertaken in Henley to monitor Particulate Matter and address air quality issues. Officers confirmed that they would welcome the opportunity to work with interested groups in the other AQMAs to address air quality issues.

RESOLVED: to ask

1. officers to circulate (when received) the report setting out Oxfordshire County Council's views on the Low Emission Strategy proposed measures to address air quality in Wallingford to committee members;
2. the Cabinet member for housing and environment to establish an air quality review group to consider action plan items, key performance indicators and a timeline for implementation of actions;
3. officers to circulate details of Oxfordshire County Council's HGV reporting tool to councillors;
4. officers to provide an update in 18 months.

34 Climate work programme

Councillor Sue Roberts, Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, provided an update on the work of the committee. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. The committee noted that the purpose of the presentation was to receive an update on progress and not to scrutinise the individual proposals. The committee would have the opportunity to monitor performance at future meetings.

In response to councillor questions, the committee was advised that an additional officer resource has been requested to support the work of the committee within the proposals from the committee that would be costed for consideration by Cabinet.

35 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee noted that the only item of business for consideration at the meeting on 4 February 2020 will be the 'Budget 2020/21' item. The remaining items included on the work programme for that meeting will be considered at the meeting on 23 March 2020. The committee further noted that the 'Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and Delivery Framework' item will be included on the June meeting agenda.

The meeting closed at 8:47pm

Chairman

Date

Correction to Air Quality Scrutiny Report - 21 Jan 2020

AQMA Name	Date of Declaration	Pollutants and Air Quality Objectives	City / Town	One Line Description	Level of Exceedance	
					At Declaration	Now
Henley	01/01/2003	NO ₂ Annual Mean	Henley	An area encompassing Duke Street and Bell Street in 2002 and was further extended in 2004 to include the Market Place, Hart street and Reading Road.	45.1 µg/m ³	39.6 µg/m ³
Wallingford	28/03/2008	NO ₂ Annual Mean	Wallingford	An area encompassing the High Street and part of Castle Street, St Marys Street and St Martins Street	48.3 µg/m ³	37.4 µg/m³
Watlington	31/03/2009	NO ₂ Annual Mean	Watlington	An area encompassing Shirburn Street, Couching Street and Brook street	51.3 µg/m ³	39.2 µg/m³

The table in paragraph 18 of the AQ Report contains two figures which were calculated using a now outdated calculation method. The table above includes the updated figures highlighted in bold.

These figures have been recalculated following Defra's release of updated best practice guidance on the diffusion tube adjustment calculations, as a result the monitoring results have been adjusted accordingly. Following Defra's approval, these were included in an updated version of or 2019 Annual Status Report.

The differences in concentration between the two calculation methods were minor, resulting in no changes in some monitoring sites and a maximum difference at others of $\pm 0.8 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

South Oxfordshire Climate and Ecological Emergency

Councillor Sue Roberts –

Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

What is a climate emergency?

- Acknowledging an emergency situation
- Raising awareness about climate change and the ecological crisis
- First step to action
- Allocation of existing resource
- Establishing climate change as a priority through our Corporate Plan 2020-24



South Oxfordshire's Declaration

- Climate Emergency Declaration

11 April 2019

- Districts are well placed to lead in reducing carbon emissions
- Stated our intention to adopt an early carbon neutral target
- Acknowledged that we had just 10 years to act if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius



Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

- Climate Emergency Advisory Committee established 18 July 2019

Committee's Role:

- Advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis
- Provide community leadership
- Recommend to Cabinet ways in which the Council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices
- Prioritise projects for inclusion in a recommended climate change work programme and strategy

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

- Politically balanced make up - twelve councillors (2 green, 4 liberal democrat, 3 conservative, 1 labour, 2 independent)
- Meeting dates:
 - 19 September 2019
 - 20 November 2019
 - 28 January 2020



CEAC achievements to date

- Set targets

Carbon Neutral Council by 2025
Carbon Neutral District by 2030

- Targets approved by Cabinet 8 October and Council 10 October
- Reviewed and contributed options for Climate Emergency work programme
- Set up Task and Finish Group
- Crowmarsh council offices – reviewed sustainability options
- Future Homes Standard – reviewed government consultation and provide input into South Oxfordshire response

Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group

- Role – work with officers to develop detailed work programme proposals and shape project activity
- Make up - four councillors (2 green, 1 conservative, 1 labour)
- Meeting dates:
 - 8 October 2019
 - 18 December 2019
 - 17 January 2020 (shared with Vale)



Task and Finish Group achievements

- Further reviewed work programme options
- Commissioned urgent work within 2019/20 budget
- Prioritised and selected actions for Climate Emergency year one work programme, based on impact and deliverability including feasibility, resource and carbon savings
- Scoping and exploring a Climate Change Conference for council officers and members



Commissioned work - Establishing baselines

Council operations

- Review and validate the Council's energy consumption data

District-wide

- Defining the scope of district wide carbon emissions
- Compilation of South Oxfordshire's district wide energy consumption data



Commissioned work - Behaviour change

Current activity to support behaviour change:

- Scoping an **event** to inspire officers and councillors and share knowledge on climate change
- **Training** for officers on the climate emergency and their role
- Offer to facilitate **workshops** with Town and Parish Councils across the district
- Scoping a **vision for a low carbon future** for South Oxfordshire



Year one work programme – journey

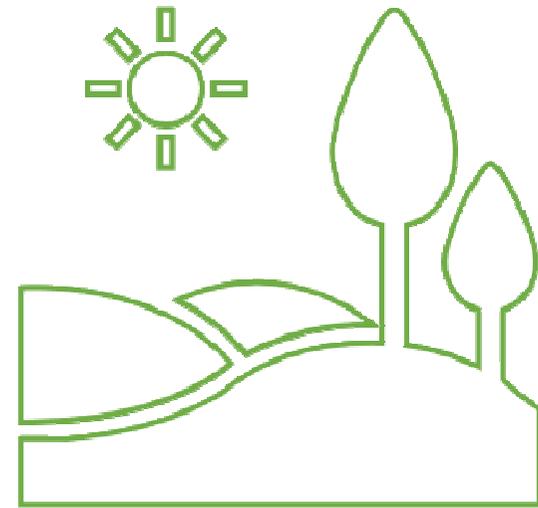
- Initial proposed long list of options
- Evaluation and costing by service teams and external consultants
- Prioritisation by Task and Finish group 18 December 2019
- Climate Emergency Advisory Committee 28 January 2020 review and recommendations to Cabinet
- Cabinet 30 January 2020 to review recommendations against competing budget priorities
- Year one work programme if taken forward
- Delivery monitored through Cabinet and Scrutiny



Minute Item 34

Year one work programme - themes

- Work programme structured into seven themes:
 1. Council Business
 2. Housing
 3. Partnership
 4. Transport
 5. Infrastructure
 6. Biodiversity
 7. Behaviour Change



Business as usual

- Corporate Delivery Framework - Strategy and Policy Workstream Guidance
- Major contract renewals
- Leverage resources by working with public and private partners with similar goals
- Influence policy by central government
- Monitor Oxfordshire wide councils' climate emergency action plans



Climate Emergency Advisory Committee - Forward Plan

- Car Park Fees and Charges
- CIL spending, biodiversity
- Review of electric vehicle charging points
- Oxfordshire Pension Fund consultation
- Air quality update
- Communication and Engagement outreach plan



Climate Emergency in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024

- Climate change and the environment are emerging as strong priorities in the draft Plan
- CEAC anticipate opportunities to review drafts and provide advice to Cabinet on it's content
- A one year work programme is proposed as a sensible response to the emerging Corporate Plan 2020-2024
- Provides a base for future Climate Change Strategy development

