

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2019

CORNERSTONE ARTS CENTRE, 25 STATION ROAD, DIDCOT, OX11 7NE

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)

Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Lynn Lloyd, Caroline Newton, David Rouane, Ian White and Celia Wilson

Officers

Paul Bateman, Chloe Bunting, Andrew Down, Heather Saunders and Michelle Wells.

1 Vice-chair

The Committee considered a proposal to appoint a Vice-Chair.

A motion moved and seconded, to appoint Sam Casey-Rerhaye as Vice Chair was declared carried on being put to the vote.

RESOLVED; Sam Casey-Rerhaye be elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the ensuing year.

2 Chairman's announcements

Sue Cooper arrived partway through this item and took no part in the discussion.

Chair's Inaugural Statement

The Chair addressed the Committee and the public who were present. The full text of her statement was;

'Globally, we have 11 years to turn around our carbon emissions. Other local councils have responded by setting targets for their districts and cities to reach carbon zero by 2030, some even earlier. Climate breakdown is already upon us, with catastrophic events occurring daily, from Hurricane Dorian wreaking havoc in the Bahamas a couple of weeks ago leaving 50 dead and 70,000 homeless, to biblical floods in Northern Spain this week. The desertification of Mediterranean countries is underway, and hostile new natural environments are driving millions of people from their homelands.

Since Margaret Thatcher gave her speech on the dangers of global warming to the UN Assembly 30 years ago, we have emitted more carbon dioxide than we had emitted in the whole of human history before then. Do we then, in the next 30 years anticipate the breaking down of human civilisation?

It is not only our species that is affected. We are a part of nature, and nature is in crisis. Ours is amongst the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and outside of London, Oxfordshire is the worst in the South East of England. The older ones of us will remember the dawn chorus, a cacophony of sound replaced now by a soloist wood pigeon. We remember the roads littered with squashed hedgehogs, and rabbits cavorting in fields. All gone. We remember road visibility quickly diminishing as our car-windcreens covered up with the tiny corpses of thousands of insects. Not now.

We are in crisis. So what should we be doing?

Tonight we shall set a target for carbon-neutrality. We should hold this very clearly in our minds and then embark on the seismic shift to get there. We must change our Local Plan to ensure that every home built and all new settlements are carbon zero. We need to set our sights on a radically different district with people working near their homes to reduce commuting, and walking, cycling or taking fast transit to wherever they want to go, without needing a private car. We want to see our landscape refilled with an abundance of diverse animals and plants.

For this, we will need people in our council: planners, administrators and communicators to advise our citizens and lobby higher authorities. Tonight, we will consider setting up officer project groups to work with 'task and finish' councillor groups. We want to work interactively with all levels of society to embed climate action into our normal lives. We need citizens to engage with us and shall consider setting up a Residents' Panel.

The District Council has a vital function in co-ordinating work across society. Council staff have done a terrific job putting this report together showing what actions are already underway and what actions can be built upon. We will review these for costing and appraisal and set about resourcing them. Some things we can do now; some through liaison with appropriate partners; and some will require new resource, and then, we can have programmes ready and waiting for the moment that Government wakes up to the demands of its own Committee on Climate Change, which states that action must be co-ordinated and funded at council level.

Beyond our next steps, we need to delineate clear paths to our endpoint, setting up new programmes to tackle hard-to-manage issues. Take the retrofit of existing homes for energy efficiency. Essentially, we have picked the low-hanging fruit with loft and cavity insulation. Now we have to deal with solid wall insulation and other complex tasks. We should set up a bold new programme to manage the bespoke retrofit of every one of the 60,000 homes in our district, including the inefficient homes that are being built currently.

Where we once led the world, austerity and the slashing of all things green has tipped us off course for meeting our UK climate targets. For us in South Oxfordshire financial and organisational constraints are hurdles to overcome. We have been starved of funds since 2010 and run on half our previous budget, annually dipping into reserves to meet our obligations. Complex council processes have brought us to this meeting today, from when we declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019. Now may be the time when we must speed up normal processes to react faster to this crisis and we will address this in Item 9

of the agenda. Let us tonight show the leadership that is so strongly required. South Oxfordshire could set the bar as the UK once did with its 2008 Climate Act.'

Public Climate Emergency Events

The Chair announced that Friday 20 September 2019 was the Global Strike for Climate Day, which would be marked by marches and events around the world. There would be events in Oxford.

Sunday 22 September 2019 would be Car Free Day. The event, backed by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council, encouraged motorists to get out of their cars to highlight the benefits of traffic-free streets, including reduced air pollution.

From Saturday 23 November to Sunday 1 December 2019, there would be National Tree Week. This would be the UK's largest annual tree celebration, marking the start of the winter tree planting season (November to March each year).

3 Apologies for absence

Sarah Gray, Kate Gregory and Simon Hewerdine tendered apologies.

4 Declarations of interest

David Rouane declared that he was Director of 10:10 Climate Action.

Sue Roberts declared that she was Co-Ordinator of South Oxfordshire Sustainability.

5 Urgent business

Lynn Lloyd, Caroline Newton and Ian White arrived partway through this item and took no part in the discussion.

The Chair reported that Cabinet would shortly be reviewing a revised Capital Grants Policy. The Committee were eager to have an input to this process, to ensure that minimum levels of sustainability and energy efficiency were incorporated into the evaluation system. They were particularly interested in stipulating zero carbon for all new building projects and extensions, in line with targets selected by the Committee in the meeting for recommendation to Cabinet. The Committee were prepared to make a recommendation to Cabinet in respect of a revised Capital Grants Policy.

The Chair urged the committee to make timely comments to the appropriate Cabinet member, Maggie Filipova-Rivers.

Celia Wilson referred to section 23.b) of the Options and Next Steps report (item 7), and to effect immediate progress, enquired about drafting a motion to council, regarding the draft emerging Local Plan 2034 and the need for planning policy to fully take into account the minimisation of carbon. The Acting Deputy Chief Executive advised that the role of the Committee is to make its views known to Cabinet, rather than via a motion to Full Council.

6 Public Participation

Alexandrine Kantor arrived partway through this item and took no part in the discussion.

The Committee heard a number of public speakers who had registered to address them;

Stewart Lilly – use of plastics by councils and the NHS

Grant Norton – energy usage and sustainable systems

Amber Chainey – sustainability in building developments and the need for local organisations to work together on climate change.

Jules Stevenson – urged council to aim for the highest standard and select Option 3.

7 Options for the Future and next steps

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Partnership and Insight, which set out the options for recommendations that the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) could make to Cabinet in response to the climate emergency declaration.

The Committee noted that all other Oxfordshire Councils had declared or acknowledged a Climate Emergency and were yet to declare specific actions to achieve targets or publish work programmes. A Climate Emergency was declared by the South Oxfordshire District Council on 11 April 2019. At the present time, 212 councils across the United Kingdom had declared Climate Emergencies, equating to 52 per cent of principal authorities. 86 district councils had declared a climate emergency. 56 of these (65 per cent) explicitly pledged to become carbon neutral on council operations.

The report outlined options for an early carbon neutral target, ranging from pledging to be a Carbon-Neutral Council, to aspiring to be a Carbon-Neutral *District*. There was also a middle option to achieve carbon neutrality, which has been named Carbon Neutral Council 'Plus+'. The report set out the benefits and risks of each option. To achieve the desired target, a programme of work to explore seven themes was proposed. Options for specific topics would be subject to further evaluation and costing before being included in any final work programme.

The Committee were asked to consider recommending whether South Oxfordshire DC should consider a range of ideas for how realistically to achieve any target that was set. Strategies could include: integrating climate emergency action into existing work streams, working closely with outside partners to deliver on key initiatives, scoping important projects well enough to seek outside funding for them and eliminating existing programmes to redirect staffing and funding to climate emergency work. Elimination of existing programmes would need to consider that some core services were mandatory and that there were funding limitations.

The work programme proposals were grouped under seven themes of council business, partnership, housing, infrastructure, transport, biodiversity and behaviour change. This was informed by an informal CEAC workshop held 12 August 2019, attended by CEAC councillors, or by officers engaged in the development of the report. The Committee were asked to consider defining the elements of a strategic response in respect of the following themes. Each Theme contained a sub-set of practical activities and initiatives to meet the objectives.

A motion moved and seconded, to recommend to cabinet proposals to tackle the climate emergency was declared carried on being put to the vote.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet;

(a) Recommend Target Option Three; South Oxfordshire to become a carbon neutral council by 2025 and a carbon neutral district by 2030. This to be an overarching goal for the Council in respect of adopting an early carbon neutral target as outlined in the Council motion put forward on 11 April 2019.

(b) The Committee be authorised to review the Climate Emergency Work Programme proposals for further exploration, full evaluation and costing. The Committee agreed to recommend that the activities and actions contained in the agreed themes be pursued, with a council strategic response being defined in each case;

Theme 1, Council Business

Theme 2, Partnership

Theme 3, Housing

Theme 4, Infrastructure

Theme 5, Transport

Theme 6, Biodiversity

Theme 7, Behaviour Change

Points of amendment:

Theme 1, additional point of action; for the CEAC to be a 'paperless committee'.

Theme 1, additional point of action; for the CEAC to seek to have 'quick wins' item on the agenda for future meetings.

Theme 1, additional point of action; Council reporting templates to include climate impacts section.

Theme 1, 21.g, remove 'offsetting with community benefit' therefore option is revised to: 'Support community-led initiatives which address climate change and invest in the energy efficiency of community buildings, for example through the grants programme'.

Theme 3, 23.a, addition of 'at a minimum' therefore option is revised to: Policy; monitor the national policy position in respect of energy standards for new homes to ensure that the Local Plan reflects the latest national policy at a minimum".

Theme 4 – Infrastructure: 24.b, Committee members articulated a preference for this point to be stronger and more emphasis placed on reviewing opportunities for renewable energy.

Theme 4, 24.c addition of 'maintenance of charging infrastructure' therefore option is revised to: Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy; deliver and maintain charging infrastructure to support transition to electric vehicles.

Theme 4, additional point of action for 'harmonisation of electric charging suppliers and payment options in respect of electric vehicle infrastructure'.

Theme 5 – Transport: Additional point of action to review Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council's *Connecting Oxford* proposal.

Theme 6, 26.a, change '10-15%' to 'substantial', therefore option is revised to: 'Require all new developments to deliver a substantial net gain in biodiversity through new local plan policy.'

Theme 6, 26.e to be amended to include 'spend at least 5% of CIL receipts on supporting Biodiversity/Green Infrastructure projects.'

Theme 6 additional point of action; for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Policy to be reviewed at future CEAC meeting.

Theme 7 – Behaviour Change: Additional point of action to implement an external internet page on the subject of the climate emergency.

Theme 7 27.ciii addition of 'new enterprises', therefore option is revised to 'Encourage new, low-carbon enterprises business into the area, identifying incentives for them to locate locally'.

Theme 7 additional point of action; 'Exploration of questions in respect of climate change and action being embedded within residents' survey'.

Theme 7 additional point of action; Mapping exercise to be completed on the local climate action groups, including youth groups.

Theme 7 additional point of action; 'link with Public Health to share public health messages in respect of the benefits of leading a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle'.

(c) Committee be authorised to support the commissioning of expertise where necessary to define and validate the Council's and District's energy consumption and carbon dioxide and equivalent (CO₂e) emissions baselines, and to fully explore, evaluate and cost proposed work programme options. The cost of this scoping exercise should be met within 19/20 existing budget, any increased expenditure outside of the remaining 19/20 budget will be subject to approval as set out in the council's financial procedures.

(d) Committee be authorised to approve commencement of a communications plan, to include engagement with members and officers, residents, community groups and businesses into routine communications by the district councils and the exploration of a Resident Advisory Group. Additional incorporation of a strong social media link.

(e) Committee be authorised to establish a task and finish group to work with officers on putting forward work programme proposals for further evaluation and costing, this will include assisting with building the programme proposals into a coherent strategy and presenting options back to the committee. This will enable the committee to prioritise and recommend to Cabinet their implementation.

(f) In addition to scoring points for energy efficiency/renewable technologies, the Committee recommends that the Capital Grants Scheme sets minimum standards for relevant projects and that grants are only offered to applicants that meet these standards. The Committee also recommends that ambitious minimum standards are announced for implementation at a future date to be agreed. This date should align with the timescale of the Council's commitment to meet these standards for its own developments.

(g) Recommend that the Council commences work with parish councils and charities to plant trees, under ecological supervision, on margins of recreation grounds, verges and commons.

(h) Recommend that a conference is held for officers and members on the subject of climate change.

(i) Committee voted to pass motion 'the committee does not believe that sufficient weight is given in LP 2034 to responding to the climate and ecological crisis that we face'.

(j) Recommend the Creation of a Supplementary Planning Document to provide additional guidance on mitigating impact on the climate within developments expanding on Policy CSQ2 of the adopted Core Strategy or prepare a Supplementary Planning Document expanding on policies INF4, TRANS5, DES1, DES8, DES10 of the submission Local Plan 2034.

(k) Committee recommend implementation of planning enforcement standards.

8 Scene-Setting and Background

The committee received a report which set the scene and background

The committee noted the report and adopted it as a supporting document to the report 'Climate Emergency: Options and Next Steps.'

9 Terms of Reference of the Committee

The Chair reported that in the Autumn the Council would be undertaking a Constitutional review, to which she would input. She hoped to enhance the power and role of the committee through amended terms of reference.,

10 Recommendations to Cabinet

Contained in item 7, above.

11 Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for following item of business Part 1 of Schedule 12A 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) It involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing this information;

Crowmarsh Council Offices Project – Sustainability Options

12 Crowmarsh Council Offices Project - Sustainability Options

The committee considered a report on sustainability options for the Crowmarsh project for the new council buildings.

A motion moved and seconded, to note the latest situation, and to recommend to cabinet sustainability proposals for the new council buildings, was declared carried on being put to the vote.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to make recommendations to Cabinet.

Part way through the consideration of this application, members took a vote just before the meeting guillotine of 8:30pm to continue the item they were on.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman

Date