

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 4.30 PM ON TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2020

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

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)
Sam Casey-Rerhaye (Vice Chair), Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Sarah Gray, Kate Gregory, Lynn Lloyd, Caroline Newton, David Rouane and Celia Wilson

Officers

John Backley, Paul Bateman, Chloe Bunting, Liz Hayden, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells

23 Chairman's announcements

None.

24 Apologies for absence

Councillors Ian White and Simon Hewardine sent apologies for absence.

25 Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED:

To adopt the minutes of the committee meeting held on 20 November 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chair signs them as such, subject to correcting a typographical error for minute number 18, under the paragraph "Future meetings of the advisory committee".

26 Declarations of interest

Councillor Rouane declared that he is a Director of the climate action charity, Possible.

27 Urgent business

No urgent business

28 'Deep Adaptation' article

Committee Chair urged members to read the “Deep Adaptation” article, but it was not going to be discussed as part of the agenda.

29 Public participation

Four members of the public were present with three minutes each to present to the committee.

The first speaker was Giles Cattermole, Councillor for Wallingford, but speaking as a private individual. Mr Cattermole discussed what he considered to be the two main sources of CO2 emissions in the area – Gas and electricity for household heating, and transport emissions. Ideas included for the heating issue are: improving thermal efficiency of housing – new build and old, with nothing below code six. Revocation of the EU “REACH” Directive against copper wood arsenic treatment of windows and doors, and LED lighting. For transport emissions, Mr. Cattermole suggested reducing the need for residents to commute out of area for work, and promotion of electric vehicles with subsidised parking, charging zones and various incentives for switching to electric.

The second speaker was Patrick Fleming. Patrick thanked the three officers who attended a meeting with Henley Town Council. He discussed wilding trees and a move back to holistic agriculture, reducing nitrates and increasing grazing. The Chair asked for a future committee agenda item on collaboration with local farmers, which was regarded as key to climate awareness success.

RESOLVED to:

Include an item to a future committee agenda on collaboration with local farmers.

The third speaker was Guy Wilkin of harBUG – a local cycling group. He discussed cycling outcomes in the new housing developments, stating that the connections with towns were poor. He suggested challenging County Council to support cycling in planning. The committee noted that Full Council already passed a motion that it would work closely with County whilst planning the Didcot network. Further discussion confirmed that landowners were helped to create cycle paths. The idea of replicating cycle to train commutes with cycle to bus was mentioned.

A fourth speaker was given permission to speak. John Broad is involved in the local motorcyclist action group. Mr. Broad was talking in support of motorcycles as a smaller alternative to cars, which create less congestion and take up less parking space. He mentioned an example of Northamptonshire, who include motorcycles in their strategy to fight pollution and congestion. He raised the point that motorcycles were much better for people who cannot pedal cycle for health reasons or have to travel long distances.

30 Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Steering Group

The Committee was asked to nominate a representative for the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Steering Group.

RESOLVED:

To nominate Councillor Caroline Newton to represent the Council at the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Steering Group.

31 Climate Emergency -Year One Work Programme

The Committee Chair gave an address, which is attached in the appendix to these minutes.

The committee read through the report of the Head of partnership and insight. Officers were present to answer questions. The committee reviewed the year one work programme.

Cllrs Newton, Robb and Roberts are part of the task and finish group who reviewed all the initiatives and prioritised them for the programme. The focus was on the projects that were deemed to have the biggest impact. These were split into themes and priority levels. Priorities included electric pool cars for business use, the new Crowmarsh office build and operation, and low carbon new homes and retrofitting. The report included a budget request for a dedicated climate change officer lead, on a twelve month fixed-term basis. The committee commended the task and finish group.

Theme: Council business

On the subject of electric vehicles, the committee discussed charging facilities at Milton Park. The group were informed that the proposal is to have some dedicated staff charge points, but public charge points would be in liaison with MEPC rather than a cost to the council. The committee considered that a report was required on distribution of electric car charge points per area.

Councillors discussed with officers the merits of having a carbon emissions model, following on from the baseline review. Officers explained that having a model helps inform the committee's decision making for future plans. The model would be a one-off investment to help the committee make choices, so would not constitute being over-consultation, and would tie into ongoing consultancy fees. The model would help enable committee actions. It was agreed that preparation was needed. The budget for this item was supported.

Theme: Housing

The committee discussed Cosy Homes. Councillors would like to see more information available to the public. Under the behavioural change theme – there was a proposal of £1,000 to inform and communicate with the public, and officers were asked to include retrofit as a feature. The Super Homes programme was cited as something to replicate. An item for the task and finish group is to work on a new build and retrofit housing criteria. The committee supported in principle the production of a booklet for residents suggesting changes that could be made to different styles of housing.

A planning design guide by the Planning Policy team is being created to act as a guide for new homes. Officers explained that this would include a section on climate emergency. The project initiation document is working its way through governance and would be brought to the committee. This would be a future item for the committee to consider.

Theme: Behaviour change

The committee debated the classification of projects in the grants programme, as environmental impact now received a heavier weighting. For example, children's playgrounds and village halls could be disadvantaged. These could score more poorly for environmental issues, despite being very much needed for social cohesion and health. It could be argued that there is environmental benefit as these facilities could prevent parents from driving their children somewhere for entertainment. A community hall could

receive funding for insulation yet be denied funding for a new community facility. Some concern was expressed about grant funding moving to climate emergency from community health.

Therefore, it was agreed that the word “solely” requires removal from the paragraph on page 51, as it disadvantaged some projects. It was added that awarding any amount, no matter how small, actually was a gateway to further funding streams. Officers would review how new weighting for energy-saving criteria affects applications. This would be considered by the committee at a future meeting.

Theme: Ongoing Projects:

With reference to table 31, Park and Charge Project – the wording required changing from ‘council’ to ‘county’, for clarity that the car parks are across the county.

The Crowmarsh council office building was discussed and committee Chair stated that her opinion was that the new office should be zero carbon in its build and operations, without off-site carbon off-setting.

Theme: Businesses

It was suggested that OxLEP should lead on training. It was agreed that the South Council Leader should write to OxLEP about this and request the Council consider this.

There was agreement that some key representatives should be invited to the planned staff conference, such as OxLEP. The task and finish group would consider this as part of their conference scoping work.

Theme: Biodiversity

Chiltern Conservation Board was mentioned as an important potential partner.

Regarding planting trees, there needed to be consideration of tree type, avoidance of monoculture and the fact that maintenance is the expensive aspect. Advice sheets on tree planting and care could be useful. It was noted that town and parish councils had land availability to progress this activity. Officers would amend the wording of this project to include a planting and maintenance programme.

It was considered that activities such a tree planting had a financial implication, and cost reductions could be achieved through working with volunteer groups.

An officer for the Nature Recovery Network would likely be housed at West Oxfordshire district council, and South Oxfordshire could possibly contribute to the funding of this post as part of this project.

RECOMMENDATION: to Cabinet;

To adopt the climate emergency work programme 2020/21.

The committee Chair asked for an inclusion into the work programme - for a minimum of code four enforcement (at least for sustainable new homes) as part of the core strategy.

RESOLVED: to scope an indication of the cost of this option, before the budget presentation on 30 January 2020, if possible.

RESOLVED: to;

Send comments to the committee Chair regarding Future Homes, who will share them with committee members.

32 Communications and Engagement update

Officers will circulate a written update to the Chair.

33 Forward Programme for the Committee

Actions were given to the committee secretary – to circulate the minutes draft as soon as possible, and to find a date for a March/April committee meeting.

34 Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 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 paragraphs 1-7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

35 Car Parking Fees and Charges

The committee reviewed a car parking charges proposal and gave comments for Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 6.37 pm

Chairman

Date

**Address from the Chair, Councillor Sue Roberts
Climate Emergency Advisory Committee 28th January 2020**

Six months hard work by a skeleton staff, with considerable input from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) Councillors, has produced the report that we are discussing today, a one-year work programme to begin in the next financial year. Michelle Wells, Insight and Policy Manager, and her team, have brought project options to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee which we have gone through and pared down.

Two-thirds of the available £15,000 climate budget for the current year was deployed to expert contractors for scoping and costing project options. Caroline Newton, Jo Robb and I, acting as a Task and Finish group, went through these and selected the highest impact ones to take forward.

Officers already work collaboratively with external partners, including on Oxfordshire-wide projects on electric vehicles, and through the *County Collaboration on Climate Change Group*. This group works at senior officer level across the six councils, and at elected member level. I have attended two meetings on behalf of SODC and am very excited by the wealth of knowledge and experience we can draw upon working at this scale, especially from Oxford City.

Other ongoing projects include the design and procurement of new Council offices. Council, on advice from our Committee, requires this to be genuinely net zero-carbon in its build and net zero-carbon in its operation (without off-site offsetting). We are seeking to procure renewable electricity for our next energy contract and are planning to adapt our Planning Design Guide to signal for low-carbon new homes. Initiatives in the Didcot Garden Town project are around low carbon transport and homes, and importantly, on growing local food.

We have commissioned, baseline reviews of energy use and carbon emissions both for our own operations and district-wide; definition of paths to change; training for officers; workshops with town councils; and planning for an all-day conference for officers and members of SODC and Vale of White Horse, in the Spring. Celia Wilson, Alison Jenner from Vale, and I, met, as a Task and Finish group, with the consultants to scope the conference. It will be both visionary and fun!

The selected work-package for next year, over and above what is already in train, has been carefully costed. It is to plan to retrofit our council-owned buildings for energy efficiency and renewables, whilst helping home-owners and landlords to do the same; to undertake feasibility studies in order to make wise investments in renewables, to reduce

single-use plastic and promote plant-based diets; to move to low-carbon travel; to encourage behaviour change and low-carbon action in the wider community and in business, including through providing baselines and strategies for change; and to develop schemes for the recovery of nature.

It is a top priority for SODC to mitigate climate change, restore our natural world and adapt to the inevitable consequences of already-built-in climate breakdown and ecosystem collapse. Our papers include an article by Professor Jem Bendell highlighting these inevitable consequences and the fact that we shall need to invest to an extraordinary extent to keep safe in the face of the near-future world-scale catastrophes that will affect us, in South Oxfordshire, within the next 10-20 years. These include crop failures leading to food scarcity, extreme weather bringing floods, storms, overheating and even, in our water-stressed region, drought.

Most worrying is the degraded state of nature in Oxfordshire. Our residents have the poorest access to nature in the south of England outside London. The UK itself is the 189th most nature-degraded country of 218 in the world. This affects our resilience in terms of growing our own food, with the loss of pollinators, soils and habitats. This is addressed in our one-year plan. Finance is required for us to join with the rest of Oxfordshire to establish a Local Nature Partnership which will have statutory force and the ability to speak up for our area nationally, and to create Nature Recovery Networks and strategies for improving biodiversity.

We could have done even more this year, there is £5500 left in the budget. However, it takes staff to manage the deployment of money. We have commissioned the most urgent work; the remainder needs to be approved by Council before going out to tender. Crucially, for such work, and to bring the year's activities to fruition, we need, at least for one-year, a dedicated Climate and Biodiversity Officer - an expert who can concentrate full-time on coordinating activity.

This Committee is fully aware of the budgetary difficulties in which SODC finds itself, spending £3.3 million (and rising) more than its income which itself is only in the order of £16 million. We have sought the most cost-effective interventions, for example, net zero carbon homes will be specified in the Planning Design Guide, to run alongside policies in the current Core Strategy, as a cheap and cheerful alternative to creating Supplementary Planning Documents. Many of the recommendations could result in long-term savings or investments for growth, such as providing electric car hire for residents, investing in megabatteries, or improving energy efficiency in our buildings.

I commend this budget to Council, to support the proposed year one work programme which is based on the scoping and prioritisation of actions that we have been working on.