

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 8 JUNE 2020

RECORDED LIVE EVENT. VIEW HERE:

<https://youtu.be/Hd8E6h8vdGY>

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)

Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Sarah Gray, Kate Gregory, Simon Hewerdine, Lynn Lloyd, Caroline Newton, David Rouane, Alan Thompson and Celia Wilson

Officers

Chloe Bunting, Michael Flowers, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells

36 Apologies for absence

Councillor Ian White submitted his apologies ahead of the meeting. Councillor Alan Thompson was present as his substitute.

37 Committee Chair's announcements

Committee Chair, Councillor Sue Roberts, addressed the committee:

Covid-19 has completely altered the landscape for climate and biodiversity since we last met in January. Lockdown and social distancing are changing the way we live and work.

Some of these changes can be harnessed for the good. The reduction in travel and commuting has markedly reduced air pollution and carbon emissions. Some degree of home working has become a preferred options for many businesses, such as Barclays who are closing entire offices. In our own council, we are responding to the positive way that many of our staff regard home-working and are adjusting our plans for the new council building. This may give more leeway to ensure that it shall be zero-carbon both in its build and in its operation.

Transport emissions should alter as people commute less. The Government's Department for Transport has allocated £2bn to allow social distancing in towns. This has led to pop-up barriers to increase the width of pedestrian areas and of cycle lanes. Oxfordshire County Council has received bids from our towns for pedestrianisation schemes or cycle path improvements. There is a general wish for 20mph limits in towns and villages to slow and smooth traffic flows. Grant Shapps, Secretary of State, calls this a 'once in a generation' opportunity to create a shift from cars to walking and cycling.

Fundamental changes have occurred shifting the focus of the economy, away, for example, from hospitality and the visitor economy. There has been a surge in unemployment and we and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership should be focusing on retraining and redeployment of people to different work.

For a Green Recovery, we need significant new skills. We need retrofitting specialists, to make the 60,000 existing homes in South Oxfordshire more energy efficient; we need passivhaus builders to ensure that new homes never need to be retrofitted as they will be zero carbon in their build and in their operation; and we need to provide good jobs on the land for an agricultural revolution that moves away from industrial, chemical-based farming and towards re-wilding for nature recovery.

A Green Recovery would also mean the repurposing of our factories to more useful goods. For example, some car factories have simply closed due to there being no market for cars during the pandemic. Others have re-purposed. Formula 1 has been making medical ventilators. Our future home heating systems will be electric; they will be heat pumps. The specialist engineers and the mass production techniques of our car industry are perfectly placed to improve designs and efficiencies of heat pumps and mass-produce them for this growing market.

The changes that are upon us are hard to take in, in their entirety. There could be a complete shift in the way society operates. It could be a shift for the better - we want South Oxfordshire to be at the forefront of guiding and encouraging this.

38 Minutes

Members expressed that they wish to see items in the minutes that are for action to be flagged up. It was agreed that these would be tabled and could be reviewed in each meeting.

The chair's address will be included in the body of the minutes.

RESOLVED:

To adopt the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 as a correct record and agree that the chair signs them as such.

39 Declarations of interest

None.

40 Urgent business

None.

41 Work programme update and the impact of the Covid-19 response on progress.

The committee went through the report provided by the insight and policy manager, who was present to answer questions.

The committee chair led the committee through the report page by page, and the main points raised are listed below.

- Item 1: the committee discussed Aether's work on calculating the district's carbon baseline. This was due to be presented at a Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) meeting, but we cannot have external presenters to our live virtual platforms at present. Therefore, it was agreed that a task and finish group would be presented to and would feedback to the CEAC. The volunteers for the task and finish group are Councillors Wilson, Robb and Roberts. The Aether report will be provided to the CEAC.
- Item 2: Creation of a vision for a future low carbon South Oxfordshire – this item is paused and the insight and policy manager explained that there is no timescale at present but she is happy to accelerate this item if it is seen as high priority. The pause is due to a possible revision of the vision due to Covid-19. This vision will be brought back to the CEAC.
- Item 3 - South Oxfordshire Greenhouse Gas Emissions report 2018/19 – corporate energy officer updated the committee that this was taken on by the policy and insight team and took time to understand and complete well. The team studied district council emissions between 2009-2013, and there was a 20 percent drop in greenhouse gases. It is expected that in 20-21 data, a drop will be seen due to Covid-19 measures.
- Item 4 - Baseline review of council energy consumption and CO₂ emissions – Concept Energy are critiquing the greenhouse gas report. Discussion was had about artificial reduction in emissions due to the lockdown. It was suggested that a five-six percent reduction in emissions during lockdown has been created, but when we need around seven percent, can we achieve this?
- The issue was raised about measuring air quality and the use of diffusion tubes and asked whether we can get more regular measurements than yearly. Councillor Rouane added that there are three air quality management areas where there are regular, real-time month by month recordings.
- Item 5 - The work planned on Faringdon leisure centre to have renewable energy heating options – the CEAC could learn from what they are doing.
- Item 6 – Tree mapping – concerns in Henley regarding mapping of hedgerows – these are important wildlife corridors that need inclusion. It was agreed that the specialist planning officer would speak to a task and finish group or a CEAC meeting.
- Item 7 – solar energy – The corporate energy officer said we are in the early stages of working with the low carbon hub. The council are keen to focus on the local area for offsite solar energy.
- Item 10 – grounds management – Councillor Rouane, Cabinet member for housing and the environment, updated the committee that potentially bringing the maintenance in-house could give better control of how we manage our grounds and cleaning in a sustainable way.
- Item 12 -Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy – Insight and policy manager to circulate an update. It is noted that the council is waiting to see where Oxfordshire County Council (who has funding for this) places their charge points so we know where is best to place ours to fill in the gaps.
- Item 14 – the planning design guide: A task and finish group would help to develop the climate policies of the guide. The council target of a carbon neutral district by 2030 is one of the drivers to redesign the guide. The inspector has been asked to involve the task and finish group in DES 11.
- It is requested that CEAC and the council should start to ask questions in response to current planning applications – are these zero carbon. A view was expressed that within the core strategy, builds must be code four. Noted that there is a relaxing of permitted development rights on existing buildings in order to allow businesses to

pick up since the lockdown. Can planners keep in touch with central government so we can get something we can enforce – a task and finish group was suggested of Councillors Casey-Rerhaye, Wilson, Robb and Roberts. DES 11 is the urgent item – inspection in a month's time.

- Item 15 – local engagement has paused due to social distancing, but it was emphasised that we have created new contacts and networks who help locally, who could possibly be involved in tackling climate issues. Grassroots level.
- A meeting of the CEAC in late June will be held to discuss the climate change and related themes of the draft corporate plan and make recommendations to Cabinet, before it goes out to consultation.
- Item 16 - Oxfordshire Pension Fund Consultation on Investment Strategy Statement – Councillor Jo Robb is working on this. Noted that a green event is held each year and is scheduled for next year.
- Item 17 – the recruitment of a climate change lead. The insight and policy manager updated that she is working on the job description and evaluation, which will go to the Senior Management Team for approval before being advertised. Uncommitted discretionary funding may be challenged in light of Covid-19. This is not unusual but prudent.
- 22.- Biodiversity theme projects – a planning officer will be invited to speak to the CEAC on tree mapping.
- Conference – can we look at doing this virtually, or a similar workshop or webinar event.
- 27. South grants programme-refocus scoping is paused, but councillors have been allocated £2,000 each for Covid-19 community support.
- 29. Cosy Homes – encourage retrofit and advise – currently people who are able to pay – Councillors queried if in future, we can help on the financial front, so that others can afford to do it. Review of the scheme is scheduled in quarter two.
- 31 – town-based energy data – Cholsey Parish Council had asked how they can baseline their carbon footprint. It was confirmed by officers that the town-based energy data project is planned for initiation in October-November 2020.
- 34 – enforcement officer – for private rented homes. Energy certificate minimum “E”.

At 19:27, Councillor Newton left the meeting.

The committee requested the actions be tabled and reviewed at each meeting. The democratic service officer will work with the insight and policy manager to create this. Farmers and landowners item to be added.

Other items to include in future meetings:

- Bicycles and walking – Didcot Garden Town
- Travel plans for council staff – active travel. Cycling champion to speak at the next meeting – Councillor Casey-Rerhaye. Strategic travel network development.
- ARC government update
- Opportunities for air quality data – feedback
- Councillors note it is Bike Week

42 Public participation

None.

Meeting ended 19:35

Chairman

Date