

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2020

THIS WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING. PLEASE VIEW HERE:

<https://youtu.be/wFsBy4j-bMo>

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)

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

Officers

Michael Flowers, Bex Harvey, Dominic Lamb, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells

43 Chair's announcements

Climate issues have come to the forefront in recent months with us having the sunniest, driest spring on record. Whilst that was an absolute blessing to help us get through the pandemic, it presages disaster at the global scale. Last week, temperatures in Siberia, usually around 20°C in June, reached 38°C. This is especially alarming because methane and carbon dioxide lie frozen in the 'permafrost' below the ground and are released as the permafrost thaws. Methane is 30 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) exists to ensure secure supplies of energy and has hitherto shown no aversion to fossil fuels. Things have changed. The IEA say the world has only six months to change the course of the climate crisis and prevent a post-lockdown rebound in greenhouse gas emissions. We welcome the well-researched report today from our officers setting the scene for us to do exactly that, change course with a Green Recovery from Covid-19.

Elected members have been working with officers too to produce the new draft Corporate Plan which shifts the emphasis away from growth for growth's sake, and towards genuinely sustainable living, carbon reduction and biodiversity recovery. We have the opportunity to comment on this today from a climate and biodiversity perspective.

At the same time, Council has been preparing for the Local Plan hearings. Elected members who commented on the plan in 2019 have not had an input into the dialogue between planning officers and the inspector. Indeed, the inspector has been concerned about senior elected members being present at the hearings at all, least it make our

planning officers uncomfortable. Members have been instructed to be uncritical at the hearings.

This is worrying for those of us concerned that a 50% increase in housing is **unnecessary**, when our population is set to rise by only 10%; **unsafe** as it will create large greenhouse gas emissions in construction and operation of the homes; and **insecure** as it takes land from wildlife and farming when the natural world is collapsing, and food security considerations demand that we grow more food locally.

However, our last meeting of this committee bore fruit, in that a CEAC task and finish group is to have an input into the new policy DES11 which defines reductions in operational carbon emissions from new homes. Laudable though it is to increase energy efficiency standards for new homes, this in itself will not make the Local Plan compliant with the Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019), the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 nor the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations.

To make the Sustainability Appraisal, on which the Local Plan is based, compliant with statute and international law, it must show how emissions will be reduced district-wide, baselining the whole district for carbon stores and sinks, estimating climate impacts for prospective sites and prescribing monitoring, and mitigation for carbon absorption and reduced emissions. All land use policies should take account of extreme weather events, of serious and prolonged water shortages, and of the need for a modal shift in transport to car-free living. Additionally, not to forget the natural world, landscape scale mapping and planning for nature should underpin a new Sustainability Assessment.

Our climate action plan and the draft Corporate Plan set us off upon just these sorts of assessments right now and we will ensure that our work will produce future Local Plans that are legally compliant on the climate and biodiversity front.

44 Apologies for absence

Apologies from Councillor Kate Gregory. Councillor Alexandrine Kantor was present as her substitute.

45 Declarations of interest

Councillor Rouane declared that he is a Director of Possible.

46 Urgent business

Committee chair asked that all reference to chairman be changed to chair within committee papers.

Councillor Wilson needed to leave the meeting by 7.30pm so asked to raise the following point:

Councillor Wilson asked for a future agenda item on our use of computers instead of paper, and we should ask for guidance from IT on how we can effectively replace paper. It can take longer to read from a screen, and also the issue of note taking when using screens. How can we most effectively use our computers to make it easier for everyone. It is acknowledged that this is not easy for everyone at present.

47 Minutes of the last meeting

To review the minutes of the meeting on 8 June 2020, and for the Chair to sign them as a correct record.

The committee requested that in addition to the table of future agenda items, actions should be marked appropriately within the minutes.

Regarding the item on the staff and members conference for South and Vale – it was requested that options for a virtual event / webinar should be explored by officers.

RESOLVED: to

Approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting on the 8 June 2020. The chair will sign them as such.

48 The Green Recovery from Covid-19

Insight and policy manager gave a brief introduction to the report, which is an overview of the government response to Covid-19 and Green Recovery to give greater impetus to climate change actions. How do we wish to consider reprioritising, refocus and re-comment or add to projects in the one year work programme, to align with emerging national recovery programmes and the South Oxfordshire District Corporate Plan which is being reviewed later in this meeting.

The points raised by the committee are outlined as follows:

- Page 2 – The committee questioned what is meant by resilient.
- Page 3 – job creation needs to specify green jobs as a priority for the area.
- More promotion of pedestrianisation was supported, for health and air quality benefits. Pedestrianisation also eases social distancing.
- It was supported that we should specify zero carbon in build and operations for new developments.
- Discussion was had regarding the mechanisms of asking for zero carbon build. Can we look at other Authorities? We aren't enforcing code 4 on sustainable homes currently although allowed in the old local plan which is still in use. Planning permissions were relaxed during the Covid-19 outbreak. We have a budget in the one-year work programme for an enforcement officer, focused on Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), and within that post we hope there could be the opportunity to include some additional planning enforcement activity. Where appropriate to do so, we should ask developers to build carbon zero. The more we ask, making it a common request, the more success we may have.
- Page 3 – please add rewilding to this item.
- It was confirmed that the committee could ask for carbon zero via the new design guide. Must comply with current planning policies but can be put in as a request. Workshops to be held soon with task and finish group – raise this issue here.
- Can we ask developers to include biodiversity supporting features such as swift boxes, bee friendly features and so on.
- 5th bullet point – can we clarify what clean heat grant is?
- Discussed the recent active transport funding via Oxfordshire County Council – there was only 1 week to make a request – so it was agreed we need to have “shovel ready” projects that are ready to go when funds emerge.
- Mechanisms were discussed for making requests to planning applications – discussed how much statute can be brought to planning determination. Statute trumps the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance. Current statute

of being carbon zero by 2050 could be brought into applications now. How far can statute be used in determination. Future discussion / write to the Chair of Planning Committee and the Head of Planning, after first exploring legal aspects with Legal.

RESOLVED: to seek legal advice on whether statute and law can override the old local plan that is currently in use.

Other discussion points continue as follows:

- It was requested that the committee should feed upwards to Council
- Should we be working on skills/ apprenticeships seeing as we have the local business links
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) have implemented some improvement measures for cycling such as verge clearing, but it was expressed that it would be better to not spread the funding so thinly, and to divert funds to a few ambitious projects, such as cycle routes between town and village – safety measures that would encourage more to cycle and or walk. Safety concerns regarding cycling and walking between village and town were considered by the committee. The Cabinet member for environment agreed to feed this back to the County Council.
- Tranche 1 of OCC funding was to existing routes and bike racks. Tranche 2 will be due shortly – please talk to county councillors about what is available to us.
- We need to create a list of requirements – ready for when funds become available, and for the public to see what is coming up. Added that some roadside cycle lanes are being improved as we speak.

The committee asked for a future agenda item to collate a list of requirements of an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and:
the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Recommendations to go to Cabinet and Council.

49 Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024

The committee reviewed the draft corporate plan before it was considered by Cabinet and out to consultation.

The Cabinet member for corporate services and the Insight and Policy manager took note of the comments raised during the review:

Theme 1: Homes and infrastructure that people need:

- Councillors wanted clarification of the theme 1 sentence, “we will provide homes people can afford to live in” – it was confirmed that this was relating to council owned property. Councillor Powell takes on board the expectations that the language may create.
- Zero and negative carbon was requested to be written alongside “ultra-low carbon”. Councillors felt we should state that carbon zero is possible.
- Add a sentence along the lines of “richly biodiverse natural world”
- Discussed the pros and cons of an aspirational plan. Need real life examples of things done or planned, to deliver to local people.
- The word “ensure”, that some councillors felt was too promising.
- It was asked that the mention of the Gateway project is not confused with the cancelled Gateway North. Specify that it is Gateway South.
- Theme 3: Investment and innovation that rebuilds our financial viability: Council office should be zero carbon in build and operation – we should lead the way on carbon zero with our office. All options need to be explored.
- Invest in ethical and renewable energy – divergence from fossil fuels

Theme 4 – Action on the climate emergency

- Behavioural change was viewed as important. A view was expressed that we need to make the wording accessible. Over consuming is not possible for all (some cannot afford it) so we can't ask some local people to consume less. Include some examples of things planned or already done.
- Councillor Lloyd to give Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB) contacts to Councillor Powell. Notes that North Wessex Downs (NWD) and CCB are different legally. NWD is legally responsible to constituent authorities whereas CCB is not – hence there is no legal obligation to adopt their management plan.
- Discussion had about protecting our green spaces

RESOLVED: To consider an agenda item at a future meeting to promote local green spaces designation within the planning system. Consider district-wide partnering to protect parks and gardens. Farmer groups should be considered as a partner

There is a wish to re-establish an Oxfordshire-wide nature partnership, and Oxfordshire County Council is already moving towards this.

MOTION: South Oxfordshire Climate Emergency Advisory Committee supported the reintroduction of a local nature partnership for Oxfordshire.

50 Public participation

None.

51 Future agenda items

The committee reviewed the table included in the meeting pack.

It was confirmed that the UK Citizen Assembly was delayed until autumn, so there is nothing to report back at the moment.

The meeting closed at 19:48pm

Chairman

Date