

Agenda



Listening Learning Leading

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Date: 19 June 2020

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A MEETING OF THE

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2020 AT 6.00 PM

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Members of the Committee:

Sue Roberts (Chair)

Sam Casey-Rerhaye

Sue Cooper

Stefan Gawrysiak

Sarah Gray

Kate Gregory

Simon Hewerdine

Lynn Lloyd

Caroline Newton

Andrea Powell

David Rouane

Alan Thompson

Celia Wilson

Substitutes

Ken Arlett

Robin Bennett

Elizabeth Gillespie

Lorraine Hillier

Kellie Hinton

Mocky Khan

Axel Macdonald

Jane Murphy

Jo Robb

Anne-Marie Simpson

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1 Chair's announcements

To receive any announcements from the committee chair and general housekeeping matters.

2 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence and the attendance of substitute members.

3 Minutes (Pages 3 - 7)

To review the minutes of the last meeting on 8 June 2020.

4 Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

5 Urgent business

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent.

6 The Green Recovery from Covid-19 (Pages 8 - 20)

Committee to note the key themes and policy thinking of using the Covid-19 recovery to accelerate and prioritise green initiatives and contribute to climate change action and how this could impact the progression and steer of the projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020/21.

7 Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (papers to follow)

To consider the draft corporate plan proposals and public engagement arrangements.

Papers to follow.

8 Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

9 Future agenda items (Page 21)

To review the table for future agenda items

MARGARET REED

Head of Legal and Democratic

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

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

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

DATE: 29 June 2020

AGENDA ITEM

A Green Recovery from Covid-19

Recommendation(s)

- (a) Committee to note the key themes and policy thinking of using the Covid-19 recovery to accelerate and prioritise green initiatives and contribute to climate change action and how this could impact the progression and steer of the projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020/21 and feed into the council's emerging recovery plans.

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides a summary of the national government and Oxfordshire Councils' anticipated approach to the Covid-19 recovery, predominantly focusing on green recovery although elements of economic, health and social recovery are also included.

Strategic Objectives

2. Work is currently being undertaken to develop the Corporate Plan 2020-2024, and climate emergency related goals are emerging as strong proposed priorities in the initial draft for the Plan. Following Covid-19, there is global recognition that climate change and the environment have increased in their importance.
3. Additionally, at the meeting of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC), 29 June 2020, committee members will review a draft of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 proposed themes and illustrative projects. Consideration of this alongside this Green Recovery report will better enable the CEAC to consider whether they would like to recommend the re-focus and re-prioritisation of projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020-21.

Background

4. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our society and economy. Both central government and local government have a crucial part to play in a recovery framework that can support, and even prioritise, a green recovery.
5. The Prime Minister and central government have faced mounting pressures on all fronts, with charities, corporations, community groups, academics and members of parliament demanding a green recovery. This report will explore the various 'Calls to Action' made by specific organisations, that are likely to influence the upcoming commitments made by central government.
6. Carbon dioxide emissions, which plunged when lockdown took effect, have since begun to rebound sharply according to National Geographic¹. Experts fear "we will leap from the COVID frying pan into the climate fire"² and without strong government interventions, the UK will return to business as usual with high carbon emissions, or even higher emission levels above pre-lockdown levels should people desert public transport in fear of their health in favour of driving their own cars.
7. The United Kingdom's role as president of COP26 means the UK government has a critical role to play, if trends towards a bailout of a high-carbon economy are to be reversed and the world is to reach net zero emissions. COP26 is the annual UN climate conference to co-ordinate global action to deal with the climate emergency. The UN summit postponed by a year to November 2021, due to Covid-19, is seen by some as the last chance to put the world back on track to meet the Paris Climate Agreement. For COP26 to be a success, the UK government must lead by example in setting out a green recovery.
8. During a national briefing session on 28 May 2020, The Prime Minister stated that the UK government will push for a green and climate resilient recovery, he stated "we owe it to future generations to build back better and base our recovery on solid foundations, including a fairer, greener and more resilient global economy"³ following Covid-19.
9. The Prime Minister is expected to deliver a speech detailing specific plans for the UK's economic recovery strategy inclusive of a green recovery at the end of June 2020.

Themes that could be included in a green recovery

10. By "bouncing back better" there is a chance to facilitate a green recovery as we emerge from lockdown and think about the lessons Covid-19 has taught us about

¹ National Geographic, *Carbon emissions are falling sharply due to coronavirus. But not for long*. April 3, 2020. <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/coronavirus-causing-carbon-emissions-to-fall-but-not-for-long/>> [Accessed on 14 June 2020].

² Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, *Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?* Working Paper 20-02 4 May 2020, p.4.

³ Prime Minister Boris Johnson, *Downing Street Coronavirus News Conference*, [television broadcast] BBC, 28 May 2020.

community response, behavioural change, resilience, the role of the government and the need for action based on science.

11. Following Covid-19, a green recovery provides a rare opportunity to align economic, social and environmental agendas. This section of the report summarises and splits out the key themes associated with a green recovery under the subheadings of economic, social and environmental. There is recognition that many of these themes overlap. Further detail on each theme is provided in the next section of the report.

12. Economic

- Increasing job creation
- Building a resilient financial system
- Reskilling and retraining for a well-adapted zero carbon economy

13. Social

- Addressing inequalities
- Further enable walking & cycling given the increase in these activities during the crisis
- Harnessing community spirit: the power of the community response to Covid-19 has highlighted the absolute requirement to work alongside people as agents of change and to understand how we can give the right support to that
- Long lasting behavioural change. This links to the role of government regulation, which has enabled a shift in behaviour at scale following Covid-19 regulations

14. Environmental

- Low carbon developments
- Infrastructure investments in renewable energy
- Restoration projects, including tree planting
- Green neighbourhoods: during the pandemic we have seen how important access to green space and natural capital has been important for people's physical and mental health
- Energy efficiency: including retrofitting existing homes and Clean Heat Grants
- Enabling the uptake of Electric Vehicles (EVs)

National approach to a green recovery plan

15. The Prime Minister and Central Government are facing mounting pressures on all fronts to deliver a green Covid-19 recovery plan, with calls to action being made being made by corporations, charities, community groups, members of parliament and cabinet members. This section details some of these individual groups calls to action and recommendations.
16. The Aldersgate Group is an alliance of leaders from business, politics and civil society that drives action for a sustainable economy. They launched a policy briefing on 12 June 2020 highlighting how an economic recovery focused on stimulating low carbon and nature restoration projects could help address regional inequality, unemployment and build a more resilient financial system.
17. Executive Director of the Aldersgate Group, Nick Molho said: “There has rarely been a time when the economic, social and environmental agendas have been so closely aligned”⁴.
18. A recovery with these projects at its heart would strengthen the UK government’s influence ahead of the G7 and delayed COP26 summits and enable UK businesses to be competitive providers of low carbon goods and services. The Group of Seven (G7) is an international intergovernmental economic organisation consisting of the seven major countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States which are the largest advanced economies in the world.
19. The Aldersgate Group have recommended that the government work closely with the Green Finance Institute and the newly launched Clean Growth Fund to identify “key market barriers and gaps to investment in emerging green infrastructure and technologies”⁵. This refers to a partnership between Triodos Bank, Tesco and Pod Point which saw Triodos providing a debt facility to support the rollout of EV chargers.
20. The Aldersgate Group have also made several recommendations relating to EVs, including bringing forward the phaseout of internal combustion vehicles - including hybrids – to 2030 or sooner, which is something the government is consulting on.
 - This would have the potential to create 200,000 permanent jobs, 57 per cent of which would be involved in the installation, operation and maintenance of charging points.
 - Commitments to accelerate the switch to EVs could be car focused, but there is recognition that there also needs to be understanding of what role will be played by e-bikes and micro-mobility modes e.g. e-scooters.
 - Enabling the uptake of EVs coupled with increasing active travel and improving bus and rail services will be essential to decarbonise the transport sector. The transport sector has been heavily impacted by Covid-19 and

⁴ Current ±, *Green COVID-19 recovery as ‘historic opportunity’ as organisations turn up the heat*, 12 June 2020 < <https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/green-covid-19-recovery-a-historic-opportunity-as-organisations-turn-up-the-heat> > [Accessed 14 June 2020]

⁵ Ibid.

there may be long term impacts, such as public reluctance to take public transport.

21. The Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group (EEIG) is also calling for a green recovery. They have focused on energy efficiency measures to support this, describing buildings as the “litmus test for a net zero recovery”⁶.

22. EEIG June 2020 report details a proposed two-year stimulus package:

- Bringing forward the £0.1 billion ear-marked for Clean Heat Grants from 2022 to 2020.
- Fully committing to the £9.2 billion worth of commitments to energy efficiency investments made in the government’s 2019 manifesto. These include the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Home Upgrade Grants and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
- Direct investments in homes from both public and private sources. The proposed stimulus package comes in at £4 billion over two years, which would support 500,000 renovations and 34,000 full-time jobs across the supply chain.

23. In a letter of 6 May 2020, the Committee on Climate Change wrote to the Prime Minister advising how climate policy can play a key part in rebuilding the UK with a stronger economy and increased resilience following COVID-19; “Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change should be an integral part of any recovery package”⁷.

24. The Committee on Climate Change highlight areas of focus that have clear economic, social and environmental benefits. These are largely in line with projects within South Oxfordshire’s Climate Emergency Programme of Work 2020/21:

- Investments in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Support reskilling, retraining and research for net-zero, well adapted economy.
- Upgrades to our homes ensuring they are fit for the future.
- Making it easy for people to walk, cycle and work remotely.
- Tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure.

25. The Committee recommend that the government prioritise actions according to their six principles for a resilient recovery:

- Use climate investments to support economic recovery and jobs.

⁶ Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group, *Energy efficiency’s offer for a net zero compatible stimulus and recovery*, June 2020, p.1

⁷ Letter from Committee on Climate Change to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, *Building a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis*, 6 May 2020.

- Leads a shift towards positive long-term behaviours. This refers to embedding new social norms, such as travel that benefits well-being whilst also reducing emissions. This will involve infrastructure provisions to improve safety for cyclists and investing in measures to facilitate social distancing on both public transport and pavements.
- Tackle the wider 'resilience deficit' on climate change. Strong policies are needed from across government to reduce vulnerability to the destructive risks of climate change and avoid a disorderly transition to net-zero. Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of evidence-led preparations for the key risks facing the country.
- Embed fairness as a core principle. The crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities, whereby the response to the crisis has disproportionately affected the same lower income groups and younger people who face the largest long-term impacts of climate change.
- Ensure the recovery does not 'lock-in' greenhouse gas emissions or increase the climate risk. There is a risk of a high carbon rebound from Covid-19 given the very low oil prices we are currently seeing. In addition, perception of the safety of crowded public spaces (including trains and buses) could see people rejecting public transport in favour of personal transport options. This should be seen in the context that transport is already the biggest sector source of CO₂ (by end user and source) and sector emissions have stayed relatively level for 20 years.
- Strengthen incentives to reduce emissions when considering fiscal changes.

26. More than two hundred top UK firms and investors (including Lloyds Bank, Asda, Mitsubishi, Siemens and Sky) are calling on the government to deliver a Covid-19 recovery plan that prioritises the environment. In a letter to the Prime Minister the proposals include:

- Driving investment in low carbon innovation, infrastructure and industries.
- Focusing sectors that can best support the environment, increase job creation and foster the recovery, whilst also decarbonising the economy.
- Putting strings on financial support to ensure firms getting cash bailout are well managed and in line with climate goals.

27. Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (SSEE) have written a working paper on 'Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?' where they have surveyed 231 central bank officials, finance ministry officials, and other economic experts from G20 countries on the relative performance of 25 major fiscal recovery archetypes across four dimensions: speed of implementation, economic multiplier, climate impact potential, and overall desirability.

28. SSEE identified five recovery policies that can deliver both economic and climate goals:

1. Clean physical infrastructure investment in the form of renewable energy
2. Building efficiency spending for renovations and retrofits including improved insulation, heating, and domestic energy storage systems
3. Investment in education and training to address unemployment resulting from Covid-19 and structural unemployment from decarbonisation
4. Natural capital investment for ecosystem resilience and regeneration including restoration for carbon-rich habitats and climate-friendly agriculture
5. Clean Research & Development spending

29. The paper by SSEE also identified other co-benefits; these are non-economic, non-climate attributes of climate-positive policies which aid in their overall desirability:

- EV incentives reduce local air pollution, especially valuable in dense urban areas
- Support for energy efficiency retrofits could be directed to lower-income households to decrease social & health inequalities by reducing real electricity costs and keeping houses warm in winter

30. Other key insights that emerged from the SSEE survey:

- Many climate-positive policies were perceived by respondents to have high overall desirability
- Most climate-negative policies had relatively low desirability.
- Long-run multipliers of climate positive-policies were found to be high, reflective of strong return on investment for government spending.

31. As economies re-open some behaviours may return to pre-crisis normal however other behaviours may change permanently. One estimate is that up to one-third of the global workforce will sustain remote working practises part-time on a permanent basis⁸. Post-crisis recovery spending offers an opportunity to embed climate-positive behaviours by supporting teleworking and high-speed broadband connectivity and residential energy efficiency.

32. The Climate Coalition (a coalition of 57 charities) are the latest to call on the UK government to adopt a green recovery from Covid-19. In a letter to the Prime Minister on 15 June 2020, they argue that a resilient economic recovery will only be possible with a just, sustainable and clean energy transition at its core and they highlight seven priority areas for action:

- Prioritise and increase public capital investment, training and re-skilling in renewable energy, energy efficiency, zero carbon transport and infrastructure
- Accelerate private sector investment in the net-zero transition

⁸ Global Workplace Analytics, *Work-At-Home After Covid-19 – Our Forecast*, 2020
<<https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

- Set economic policy foundations for a sustainable recovery
- Prioritise investment in the transition to a UK land use and farming system that delivers for nature, climate and human health
- Aligning all UK public finance abroad with a just energy transition
- Build a resilient, sustainable and inclusive global recovery by strengthening international support for the most vulnerable countries and communities worldwide
- Engage with the international community to halt and rapidly reverse the decline of biodiversity and nature globally

33. Race to Zero, launched on Friday 5 June 2020 to coincide with World Environment Day, is a government initiative designed to mobilise a renewed level of leadership from businesses, cities and regions and nations to spur a zero-carbon recovery. After the launch of Race to Zero, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) secretary Alok Sharma confirmed that more than 1,000 businesses, more than 500 universities and nearly 500 cities and regions are now Climate Ambition Alliance members, along with 120 countries and 36 major investors. This cohort covers around one-quarter of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. He concluded that “we must go further” and “unite behind a green global recovery” from the socio-economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic⁹.

34. The government conducted a green recovery roundtable on 10 June 2020, as part of a series of five, looking into the economic recovery of the UK following Covid-19. The roundtables were chaired by energy and business secretary Alok Sharma, bringing together businesses, trade bodies and leading academics.

35. The green recovery roundtable explored how to seize economic growth opportunities from a shift to net zero. There were twenty-four participating organisations. The questions participants were asked to address included:

- Which areas of infrastructure investment should we prioritise for early action to drive economic recovery and support delivery of net zero and our broader environmental objectives?
- What action should we take to align investment in the UK and globally with net zero and to protect natural capital?
- What are the key regulatory barriers weakening incentives to invest in net zero, and how do we address them?
- How can we more effectively support businesses across the economy in acting to access growing low carbon markets and support delivery of net zero? (e.g. innovation support, advice, regulatory barriers)

⁹ edie newsroom, *Race to Zero: What's set to be included in the UK's green Covid-19 recovery package?*, 8 June 2020 <<https://www.edie.net/news/11/Race-to-Zero--What-s-set-to-be-included-in-the-UK-s-green-Covid-19-recovery-package/>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

- How can we help the UK's carbon intensive sectors to transition to low/zero emissions while maintaining competitiveness?
- What actions should we take to ensure local and regional economies can effectively contribute to the net zero target?

36. The other four roundtables focused on economic recovery and discussed how to ensure the UK has the right skills and opportunities in place for its workforce over the next eighteen months;

- Increasing opportunity: how to level up economic performance across the UK, including through skills and apprenticeships, 11 June 2020.
- Backing new businesses: to make the UK the best place in the world to start and scale a business, 12 June 2020.
- The future of industry: how to accelerate business innovation and leverage private sector investment in research and development, 12 June 2020.
- The UK open for business: how to win and retain more high value investment for the UK, 13 June 2020.

Oxfordshire plans for a green recovery

37. Oxfordshire County Council are hoping to maintain the environmental benefits which have emerged from the coronavirus lockdown. Following a noticeable increase in levels of walking and cycling across the county during the pandemic, the plans will encourage more residents to choose sustainable and active alternatives to motor vehicle travel.

38. Cyclists and pedestrians in Oxfordshire will soon start to notice the benefit of urgent plans to spend £600,000 over the next eight weeks (June-August), to help them to travel safely whilst maintaining social distancing measures. These plans are the first part of a wider £2.9m of funding to be awarded to Oxfordshire County Council by Government to improve cycling infrastructure, footpaths and roadwork networks as the nation responds to the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus will be on:

- Enhanced maintenance for paths and cycle routes
- New cycle parking facilities across all districts and Oxford
- Changing signal timings to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists
- Restricting hours of loading/servicing in key city centre streets
- Park & Ride upgrades with more room to park bikes
- Freeing up routes for pedestrians only
- Improved signage

39. This funding comes as part of a £250m Department for Transport nationwide Active Travel Fund from the UK government, for local authorities to use

immediately in reallocating road space with pop-up cycle lanes, widening pavements and bus and cycle corridors. The secretary of state recognised that it is a “once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities”¹⁰.

40. With social distancing measures set to continue for the foreseeable future, Transport for London set out a plan ‘Streetspace for London’ which is designed to allow more people to walk and/or cycle whilst maintaining social distancing.
 - The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan stated “many Londoners have rediscovered the joys of walking and cycling during lockdown and, by quickly and cheaply widening pavements, creating temporary cycle lanes and closing roads to through traffic we will enable millions more people to change the way they get around our city”¹¹.
 - As lockdown measures continue to ease, the government recognise that is it important to make it easier for those who have taken to cycling/walking for essential travel and exercise during lockdown for this to continue post-lockdown in order to transition into a greener and healthier nation.
41. Much like London and other cities in the UK, some of these measures might be sustained beyond the pandemic to transform South Oxfordshire into a cleaner and more pedestrian friendly environment, whilst also supporting businesses and the local economy to return to operation.
42. Oxford City Council have noted that since the start of lockdown at the end of March 2020, the air pollution monitoring station on St Aldates has seen nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels fall by 59 per cent compared with pre-lockdown measurements¹². This is the cleanest Oxford city centre air in several generations, and, according to the City council, perhaps not previously seen since the days of the horse and cart.
43. On World Environment Day, 5 June 2020, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils announced that following lockdown there has been a marked reduction in air pollution in our districts, down by nearly 60% in Watlington¹³. The lack of traffic and the increase in walking and cycling has helped improve the local air quality.
44. Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council have released their ‘Covid 19 RECOVERY STRATEGY: Restart, Recover, Renew’ setting out their recovery objectives and priorities. They highlighted data from a YouGov poll

¹⁰ Sustrans, *Re-allocating road space to make walking and cycling safer*, <<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/urban-design-and-planning/re-allocating-road-space-to-make-walking-and-cycling-safer-during-covid-19-and-beyond>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

¹¹ Mayor of London Press Release, *Mayor’s bold new Streetspace plan will overhaul London’s streets*, 6 May 2020 < <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-bold-plan-will-overhaul-capitals-streets> > [Accessed 14 June 2020].

¹² Environmental Journal, *Oxford plots green economic recovery plan*, 13 May 2020, <<https://environmentjournal.online/articles/oxford-plots-green-economic-recovery-plan/>> [Accessed 14 June 2020].

¹³ South Oxfordshire District Council, *Air pollution reduced by more than half in our districts as walking and cycling increases*, 3 June 2020 < www.southoxon.gov.uk/news/2020/2020-06/air-pollution-reduced-more-half-our-districts-walking-and-cycling-increases > [Accessed 14 June 2020].

conducted for the Royal Society of Arts (published on 17 April 2020) to highlight how Covid-19 could be a driver of societal change:

- Only nine per cent of Britons want life to return to “normal” after the crisis is over
- Over 50 per cent hoped that they will make changes to their own lives and for the country to learn from the crisis
- 2/5 said there is a strong sense of community
- 51 per cent noticed cleaner air outdoors
- 27 per cent noticed more wildlife

45. Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council’s approach to ‘restart, renew, recover’ will aim to take a holistic view and consider the interdependencies between socio-economic factors, health outcomes, the economy, environmental matters and communities. They are looking to support their economic objectives by engaging with partners and sector representatives to secure a ‘V’ shaped bounce to the crisis-induced recession. In tandem, ensuring the Councils’ climate action commitments and zero emissions targets underpin a drive to achieve a greener, more sustainable economic growth in the long term.

46. Both councils want to:

- Support a new kind of economic growth that focuses on a ‘green economy which digital connectivity enhancement could support
- Find ways to hold on to the gains during Covid-19, such as reduced congestion and carbon emissions which are consistent with the district’s ambitions for climate change and transport connectivity
- Use the opportunity to address critical issues including net-zero emissions, tackling inequalities and future proofing our transport system

47. The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with strategic partners. It facilitates joint working on economic development strategic planning and growth. The Growth Board is due to update its terms of reference in July and it is anticipated that the revised terms of reference will be much clearer about the importance of the environment, climate change and sustainable, healthy and happy living.

48. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy is also being refreshed (OxIS) this year. The early scope of the refresh, as considered by the Growth Board on 2 June 2020, was clear that the Strategy would seek to maximise opportunities to build long lasting resilience to climate change. Creating sustainable communities by providing good access to employment, housing, open space, transport, education, services and facilities to meet community needs and that address the climate emergency and support our zero-carbon ambition.

49. The impact of Covid-19 on our communities will now be a material factor to consider in all future strategy documents, and specifically the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and OxIS, which will be overseen by the Growth Board.

50. There is certainly an impetus that the Pandemic may help to accelerate innovation in technology and policy to support a greener future. These discussions are being had at the Growth Board level informally, but they are not yet the subject of any formal plans or papers.
51. A new governance structure and executive group have been created for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Aspects under consideration include a Nature Recovery Network and zero carbon development however there are, as of yet, no published commitments or work programmes to review.

South Oxfordshire Recovery Plan

52. South Oxfordshire District Council are currently developing the council's wider recovery plan working closely with partners across the Oxfordshire system on areas that span across the county. The council's recovery plan will link to internal themes such as business continuity, the corporate plan, the transformation agenda and workforce and culture. Further it will take into consideration the financial impact of Covid-19 and any new obligations from HM Government. This represents a good opportunity to reflect whether the CEAC wish to reprioritise, refocus or introduce some areas of work that could be considered for inclusion in the council's recovery plan or update the one-year work programme.
53. The council's Economic Development Team is working with partners to develop messaging to encourage businesses to adopt new low carbon ways and not revert to previous unsustainable practices as they reopen.
- For example, festival and event businesses will be encouraged to avoid relying on drive-in events and cinemas and look at alternative ways to generate income.
 - The district will use the Reopening the High Street Safely Fund to promote the new bike racks and cycle path improvements being developed by the County Council's Active Travel Fund and will encourage residents to cycle into our market towns.

Risks

54. There are no risks arising from this report.

Financial Implications

55. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

56. Currently there are no legal implications from this report.

Conclusion

57. This report gives an overview of the likely focus of central government's green recovery, in response to Covid-19. Following official commitments to be made by

Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the end of June, a further report 'Part 2: Green Recovery from Covid-19' could be of interest and use to the CEAC.

52. Looking forward, in light of the conclusions of the national and local green recovery plans and with consideration to the South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2020-24, a future CEAC meeting could look at re-prioritising or re-focusing projects within South Oxfordshire's Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020-21 to strengthen and align with the renewed national approach, local priorities and the council's wider recovery plans.

Developing Thinking on the Corporate Plan 2020-24

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

29 June 2020

Cllr. Andrea Powell

- An opportunity for Committee to review the Cabinet's developing thinking on the Corporate Plan 2020-24 themes and illustrative projects and provide any recommendations to Cabinet on its contents with particular regard to climate change and links to the CEACs Climate Emergency work programme in advance of any public engagement and Cabinet on 9th July.

Corporate Plan Format

Theme

Actions/Projects

Measures

Theme One

Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs

Why?

- South Oxfordshire is a great place to live and work, but homes are expensive, with one of the UK's highest ratios of prices to earnings. External growth pressures too often seem to outweigh local wishes. Infrastructure has not kept up with development. New houses on the market are often beyond the reach of local residents, especially the young, and do not always meet the need to move to a truly sustainable society.

So...

- We will ensure that new homes and infrastructure in South Oxfordshire meet local needs, are sustainable, ultra-low carbon and high quality in design. We will provide homes that people can afford to live in. New developments will be accessible with walking, cycling and public transport a priority. Neighbourhood plans and local participation will sit at the heart of our planning process. We will work with partners to ensure that development is appropriate for our communities.

Homes that people need

Illustrative Actions/Projects

Working constructively with local, regional and national partners we will shape and influence programmes to deliver appropriate homes and infrastructure, including:

- Didcot Garden Town priority projects as identified by the Advisory Board, specifically a sustainable plan to redevelop the Didcot Gateway site, a public transport and active walking and cycling network, community facilities and accessible green spaces for Didcot residents
- Berinsfield revitalisation as a resident-led Garden Village with improved facilities to create an inclusive, healthy and thriving community
- New council-owned homes with a focus on quality of design, affordability and local requirements
- Support for the retrofit of our existing housing stock for low-carbon performance and to eliminate fuel poverty
- Elimination of homelessness in our District and bringing empty properties back into use

We will use the local plan policy development process and controls to ensure that:

- New homes are future-proofed, meeting the highest environmental standards and enhancing nature through sensitive, high quality design
- Spatial planning embeds public health, wellbeing and sustainability
- Changes over time in our stock of homes meet local needs
- Sustainable transport solutions prioritise walking, cycling and public transport to reduce car dependency and air pollution

Theme Two

Improved economic and community wellbeing

Why?

- South Oxfordshire has a large number of small and micro businesses, and is well placed to adapt to changes in the economy, but support will be needed for it to remain a healthy and vibrant place to live and work. The Coronavirus pandemic has shown the strength of the community but there are areas of isolation and deprivation in our district, and the benefits of access to culture, leisure and community for all has been made clear.

So...

- We will reimagine our high streets, helping **independent small businesses** to thrive and to encourage cultural well-being for all. We will encourage clean local economic development and support our **business hubs, centres of scientific excellence and our educational establishments** to become leaders in sustainable technology, innovation and enterprise. We will help our **community groups** to strengthen cohesion, reduce social isolation and tackle areas of deprivation.

Illustrative Actions/Projects

- Partner with regional agencies to ensure economic recovery, quality employment, thriving businesses and vibrant communities, avoiding the blight of “dormitory towns”
- Provide advice on access to grants, training and diversification programmes, helping local businesses to build agility and resilience
- Plan for communities connected by walking & cycling networks, with sustainable, accessible and affordable public transport and reliable Broadband, learning the lessons from the Covid-19 experience and enabling more home-working
- Launch a new community wellbeing strategy to encourage and support culture, leisure and the arts
- Work with our communities to maximise Community Infrastructure Levy funds and to allocate these to achieve best outcomes for residents in the District
- Take enforcement action on fly-tipping, dog fouling and other anti-social blights on our society
- Work with local partners to introduce civil parking enforcement as a district responsibility

Theme Three

Investment and innovation that rebuilds our financial viability

Why?

- The financial impact of Covid-19 will put further pressure on Council budgets and staff resources, compounding years of austerity, outsourcing, and a failure to raise sufficient council tax. The future funding picture for councils from Government remains unclear. In order to deliver a **progressive and ambitious agenda**, we need to reduce the gap between income and expenditure in our Medium Term Financial Plan.

So...

- We will invest to save and act responsibly and ethically with our financial resources. We will work with other councils for fair funding and will investigate new viable sources of revenue in order to maintain and improve vital services. We will ensure all financial operations and reporting support effective decision-making and strong, ethical governance.

**Investment that
rebuilds our
financial viability**

Illustrative Actions/Projects

- Develop and implement an innovative Transformation Strategy to diversify our revenue streams, improve our effectiveness and secure our on-going viability
- “Invest to save” for the District, including the delivery of sustainable new Council offices – on time and within budget – to realise future operational efficiencies
- Exercise strong Stewardship of all Council assets including property and financial investments, optimising their performance for the benefit of our residents
- Maximise external funding opportunities to support our services and to enrich our leisure, sporting and community activities

Theme Four

Action on the Climate Emergency

Why?

- The greatest challenge we face as a society is the **Climate Emergency** and our ability to **adapt our lives and our behaviours** to ensure a safe and resilient future. While statements and targets are welcome, the challenge for our district is to take action, transform our operations and inspire our residents and businesses to do the same. Aspects of our lives will need to change, but we have a duty to make this transition fair for all parts of society.

So...

- We will show leadership by developing and implementing a climate change action plan to make the council net carbon neutral by 2025. We will help our communities to plan a fair transition to a future that will be defined by climate change.

Illustrative Actions/Projects

- Achieve our own zero carbon target by 2025 and support others to achieve the district target of zero carbon by 2030
- Develop an annually approved climate emergency plan and adequately finance it
- Deliver Council-owned net-zero homes and use grants, planning policy and advocacy to ensure the same standards throughout the district
- Promote behavioural change by taking positive action on single-use plastics, air quality improvement measures and sustainable transport
- Mitigate climate change through planning and land use, enhancing biodiversity on our own land and strengthening the planning system to enforce environmental standards
- Promote the circular economy (reduce, re-use and recycle), including in our waste management contracts
- Support and encourage local businesses to respond to climate change and nature recovery
- Promote waste minimisation initiatives such as Repair Cafés

Theme Five

Openness and accountability

Why?

- The complexity of modern society and local government structures can be hard to navigate. Many services are delivered as part of external partnerships, so it can be hard for residents to see what we do and how we do it. There are some groups within our District with whom we have little engagement or interaction, so the diversity of our district is not always recognised and supported.

So...

- We will maintain and improve **high levels of satisfaction** with the services we provide and will reach out to all sectors and age-groups to foster a culture of openness and participation. We will use our influence to champion **inclusion, diversity and transparency** across all elected and unelected bodies in our region. We will **empower and invest in our staff** and conduct our operations with the highest level of **integrity and accountability**.

Illustrative Actions/Projects

- Enhance trust and accountability in democratic decision-making, including live-streaming and recording of meetings, ensuring full accessibility of facilities and monitoring progress in an open and transparent way
- Ensure that council departments work collaboratively to deliver best outcomes for residents
- Embed an organisational culture that celebrates diversity, inclusion and respect
- Apply good governance and transparency in all our working and decision-making, exploring optimal structures and mechanisms for best practice in local government
- Engage effectively with residents, Parish and Town Councils and other community organisations, using plain English in our communications and using appropriate methods and technologies to ensure equal and fair access for all

Theme Six

Protect and restore our natural world

Why?

- South Oxfordshire is a largely rural district, including parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Oxford green belt, as well as a long stretch of the River Thames. The natural world is proven to provide benefits to both mental and physical health, as well as having its own intrinsic value, and it needs our protection.

So...

- We will **respect and protect our natural environment**, especially our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other nature-rich areas. We will champion the **opportunity to restore our natural world** in both biodiverse and bio-depleted areas through nature recovery networks and other means. We will connect urban communities to their **local green spaces** and restore nature to urban environments.

Illustrative Actions/Projects

- With partners, promote in-depth mapping and surveying of ecosystems across the district, planning for restoration of the natural world and working closely with land-owners and specialist agencies
- Celebrate, protect and enhance our natural assets, including the River Thames and the AONBs and their setting, promoting our rural district for tourism, leisure and wellbeing
- Encourage the use of natural processes to combat risks arising from climate change, such as meadows and trees to reduce flooding
- Recognise and support the vital role of farming in economic and ecosystem resilience, local food provision and the recovery of soils and natural processes
- Promote an ambitious nature recovery programme, both on our own land and in partnership with developers, town & parish councils and other land-owners, including tree and meadow planting, rewilding and providing habitats for wildlife
- Work in partnership with the Earth Trust and others to improve access to green spaces in and around our towns, reinforcing access to nature as a priority for community wellbeing

Potential policies/strategies/items for CEAC review

Item	CEAC Date	Details
District carbon emissions baseline and scope – presentation from commissioned consultants	This is going to task and finish group. Feedback to be brought to the next available CEAC, post task and finish.	Contact: Insight and Policy
A review of electric vehicle charging points'	March 2020 (due April Cabinet)	Contact: Adrian Lear/John Backley
Oxfordshire Pension Fund Consultation	Awaiting details from the Pension Fund on when consultation is launching and deadline for responses	
Draft Corporate Plan	29 th June 2020	Contact: Insight & Policy
UK Citizens Assembly Report	Anticipated release date for the report from the Government is May 2020	
Non fixed date items		
Tree mapping – specialist planning officer presentation		
CEAC to advise the Planning design guide – DES 11	Task and finish group with specialist planning team	
Community Engagement and Outreach – Plan		Contact: Insight and Policy/Consultation and Engagement/Comms
Collaboration with farmers and local landowners		
Grounds maintenance		
Cycling and walking – active transport		
Overview of Growth Board and Oxford-Cambridge arc intentions		
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending – Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Provision		Purpose: options for the spending of the South CIL allocation for green infrastructure Contact: Mark Hower/Dominic Lamb
Air Quality Update Report		Contact: Simon Hill
Oxford City Citizens' Assembly Findings Report		Contact: Insight and Policy
Didcot Garden Town – Sustainability Projects		Contact: Didcot Garden Town Team