

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 4 APRIL 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING

This advisory committee meeting was held online and was broadcasted live. You can watch the meeting by following this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL5qZt1ev6A>

Present:

Councillors: Sam Casey-Rerhaye (Chair), Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Kate Gregory, Lynn Lloyd, Jane Murphy, Andrea Powell (Cabinet member for Corporate Services), Leigh Rawlins, Sue Roberts, David Rouane and Celia Wilson

Officers: Vicky Aston (Planning Infrastructure Team Leader), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer), Heather Saunders (Energy Strategy and Projects Officer), Michelle Wells (Insight and Policy Manager)

Guests: Cabinet member for Planning, Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson

140 Chair's announcements

Chair had a couple of announcements:

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had issued its bleakest warning yet. However, they expressed some hope that there was a chance to stave off the worst impacts of climate change, but action was needed quickly, especially from the wealthier nations, who in general had been slow to respond. Fossil fuel prices had rocketed and we had proven to be dependent on these fuels. Chair suggested that central government could have acted sooner over the last decade and could have fully committed to:

- adapting homes so they could use renewable energy,
- reduced consumption of fuels in general and
- generating more of our own renewable energy.

2. "The Jump" – this was a movement to encourage and support wealthier individuals to make 'the jump' to commit to 6 pledges, as follows:

- To eat a more plant-based diet with no waste
- To buy no more than 3 items of clothes a year
- To keep electrical items for at least 7 years
- To take a maximum of 1 short haul flight every 3 years
- To take a maximum of 1 long haul flight every 8 years

- Keep your existing vehicle for longer or dispose of any vehicles that you do not need.
- Make one shift to change the system – change to green suppliers, home retrofit, change pension suppliers if they invest in fossil fuels.

141 Apologies for absence

Apologies from Councillor Caroline Newton were received.

142 Declarations of interest

None.

143 Urgent business

None.

144 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 11 January were reviewed.

A member asked whether the committee's listed comments in the minutes for the CAP could be followed up on before the next meeting. Chair would add this to her report to Cabinet.

Resolved: to note the minutes

145 Public participation

None.

146 Task and finish group update

None.

147 Update from the Environment Advisory Group (EAG) - Future Oxfordshire Partnerships

Councillor Andrea Powell updated the committee as a member of the EAG. Since the last CEEAC, there had been 2 meetings of the EAG, on 25 January and 24 March.

1. PAZCO action plan was being drafted, it had been contracted out to a third party and was expected to be ready in autumn 2022 for EAG review.
2. Local Nature Partnership was looking for an independent chair with excellent experience and connections in this area of work who can open doors and lead the Partnership forward into new areas. A job description was circulated by Councillor Rouane during the meeting.
3. Tree planting - Oxfordshire Treescapes Project presentation was received. Ideas included community gardens, orchards, nurseries and hedgerows as well as tree planting.
4. OCC policy was being developed on urban trees, verges and hedges. Rapid progress on this development, with OCC Cabinet review in spring.

5. Communications strategy – collaborative action amongst authorities. A new online toolkit will be available in May 2022. OCC communications officers will be holding snapshot surveys to understand attitudes and behaviour change regarding climate change. There should be the first survey in April, then at 6-month intervals.

A committee member raised the importance of communications and quoted the town and parish forum as an example of multidirectional communications. Could this be a regular item for the committee?

148 Future items

1. How might CEEAC feed into discussions on communications? Councillor Powell responded that the CAP had a large communications aspect, so it was already on the agenda as such when we look at specific projects and the CAP.

Councillor Wilson added that she was interested in the sharing of information through our own channels within the council. For example, during Covid, lampposts had a cardboard notice around covid rules – could this be done for climate change and encourage outside parties to speak to us. Councillor Lloyd added that there was much expertise out there and they don't necessarily need to be told by the council to do what they already do.

Resolved: Councillor Wilson and Casey-Rerhaye to look at the topic of communications within the council and decide whether a future agenda item was required.

The committee wish to invite experts and local climate related groups to speak to the committee.

149 Environment Act presentation

Cabinet member for Corporate Services, Councillor Andrea Powell, opened the item. The Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader provided a high-level presentation which introduced the act and provided wider context into the aspects covered under the legislation. The officer focused on waste and resource efficiency, air quality, and nature and biodiversity. This would become a standing item to ensure the committee received further updates as the legislation progressed. The presentation was for information, and time for questions at the end.

The presentation provided will be published alongside the minutes, so the details can be found in the PowerPoint document.

The presentation highlighted the main implications for Local Authorities for:

- Waste and resource efficiency (with producers of packaging having more responsibility for recycling it)
- Air quality (Smoke control area designations), and
- Biodiversity (authorities required to look at policy, with a new requirement to enhance and further biodiversity with strategic vision).
- There will be biodiversity net gain (10%) conditions for planning applications, with a commitment to maintain for 30 years. Councils would need to monitor this.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be in place, with close involvement of districts and stakeholders with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).
- Local authorities need to produce a biodiversity report every 3 to 5 years
- Local authorities may opt to be responsible bodies for conservation covenants.

Main comments raised by the committee:

- Chair raised the issue of fast action needed from central government and the need for local level planning for the extra resources needed.
- Site clearing ahead of planning permission was raised as an issue – officer explained that there was provision in the Act to prevent pre site clearing.
- Farming legislation was deeply intertwined with this topic.
- Authorities will need the expertise in place to assess sites effectively and the information given, including offsite biodiversity gains.
- It was asked why there was no reference to carbon emissions, which was a driving force behind loss of biodiversity. Officer replied that in bringing back habitats, nature recovery links to carbon reduction and sequestering carbon – wetlands, ponds, planting, grasslands etc.

Officer was thanked for his presentation. It was noted during the meeting that the Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader was a newly appointed role to which Dominic Lamb had been appointed.

150 Water Resources South East (WRSE): Futureproofing water supplies

Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the item. The council responded to the consultation on 14 March 2022. Priorities raised by the council were a minimal carbon footprint and low environmental impact solution to water storage, smaller projects rather than a large reservoir, fixing leaks and waste reduction. You can read the council's response [here](#).

The Planning Infrastructure Team Leader provided a presentation on the processes involved in progressing infrastructure development. The officer explained that the plan, which included the reservoir, was a multi-phased approach between the years 2022-2027 and was a five-gate staged process with up to five phases. The presentation highlighted that the three water regulators had committed to work with water users to ensure better water resource planning for future needs. The process was designed to meet the water needs that were set out in the national framework and the projects in South Oxfordshire would fit into the gated process. The gated processes were designed to ensure companies would meet development milestones of identified water resource solutions that were allocated funding in the water resource management plan stage in 2019.

The standard gated schemes being investigated at gate two include seven water transfers, three reservoirs, and five other projects. It included the Southeast Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) and the Severn to Thames transfer. Members will be asked if they have any input into future consultation stages.

The officer added that the outcome of the consultation by the department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for the national policy statement for water resources infrastructure, which closed in January 2019, was not yet adopted.

Committee commented the following:

1. Querying the water needs for the South East, as it was being based on previous projections. What was good growth? Can we have localised solutions rather than large reservoirs. Officer explained that water transfers were being looked at but weren't as ahead as the reservoir schemes. Officer responded that all the evidence was required before confirming large reservoir schemes, and the council's response included this query.
2. It was felt that the consultation response was robust

3. Concern over chalk stream extraction
4. River Thames concerns – officer responded that we will have opportunity to contribute at later stages and at the moment it was unsure what the impact of water transfers would be on the River Thames.
5. Should emphasise the flood risks. Nature based solution suggested of managing / reconfiguring flood plains upriver to help mitigate flood damage.
6. Housing numbers retrieved from local plans which were higher than the population growth for the area which was under water stress already.

Overall, the committee were pleased with the consultation response from the council and were keen to explore smaller nature-based solutions over new large scale reservoirs.

Officer was thanked for the presentation.

151 Biodiversity - supporting householders on net-gain

Councillor Newton raised this topic but could not attend to speak to it. Chair briefed the committee on this in Councillor Newton's absence.

Councillor Newton previously asked what support was in place to support householders to take up biodiversity net gain features at their homes and also in new householder planning applications.

Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader sent a reference document from the RSPB to the committee, as this was currently sent to applicants for information. This was felt to be a good document, but Councillor Newton asked whether we can elaborate with a statement to seek householder support to increase biodiversity. This was a request for encouragement for householders to 'do their bit'.

Suggestions:

- Encourage communication of biodiversity tips – wild gardens, ponds, hedgehog corridors, no synthetic surfaces etc
- RHS scheme to encourage replacing fence with hedge.
- Councillor Cooper mentioned the Didcot Garden Town sounding boards and the ideas and good practice shared at these meetings.
- Suggested strapline for planning application forms to consider nature.

Officer added that there was a plethora of information to utilise, rather than reinvent the wheel we could use these. Could be a signposting issue.

152 Corporate Plan Performance Report for Quarter 3 - Climate theme

Committee were asked to consider the two environmental themes:

Protect and restore the natural world

Climate change

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services introduced the report. She added that the annual summary will pick up the trends in activity, and whether we are heading in the right direction. Some annual reporting targets will be updated, but on a quarterly basis, the wording will be changed to provide more actions on a quarterly basis as activity was occurring rather than "no progress".

The Climate Action Plan provides more detail to our projects and can be referred to for this detail.

Comments

- Chair asked committee to email Cabinet member for additional comments to raise at Cabinet.
- ACE6 – Councillor Simpson added that in November 2021 the implementation of Nature Recovery Strategies consultation was responded to.
- Local Nature Partnership budget was not yet in discussion, contributions are to be confirmed.
- How do you prioritise different areas? Details of targets? What are we measuring against?

Quarter 4 report will be due by the next meeting, but you can view the published drafts ahead of meetings [here](#).

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chair

Date

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