

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 3 AUGUST 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ww2ksfXISpY>

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)

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

Officers

Michael Flowers, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells

52 Chair's announcements

Chair's Address to CEAC 3rd August 2020

Climate change has not gone away during Covid19. Uncommonly large hurricanes have hit Texas and Florida so early in the hurricane season; Italy and Spain hit record high temperatures in last week's heat wave; and Southern France and California are ablaze.

Meanwhile in South Oxfordshire the emerging Local Plan 2035 has been in inspection for 3 weeks and there will be a summing up on Friday by the Inspector, Mr Jonathan Bore.

The Guardians of South Oxfordshire is a group of councillors and members of the community speaking up for nature, for the wellbeing of existing and future residents of the district, and for action on climate change. We have contributed to most of the hearings conducted by Mr Bore and have found him to be sympathetic and concerned for the future of our District.

Nevertheless, where we consider the plan to have fatal failings, it is possible that Mr Bore will find the plan sound, with amendments, in terms of the very loosened-up planning law that we now work to. This is worrying for those of us concerned that a 50% increase in housing is **exaggerated**, 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; **illegal** in terms of the requirement for a speedy reduction in greenhouse gases, 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.

Mr Bore was receptive to concerns over carbon emissions and nature recovery. I explained what I myself have only newly learned, that we are, in SE England, the

custodians of most of the world's chalk streams, and much of the world's chalklands. Chalk makes up our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Outside Britain it is found only in France, Texas, Greenland and Asia. We are the custodians of unique ecosystems that should not be destroyed.

He invited me to write some words on how to achieve environmental improvements, and he encouraged planning officers to work with our committee to improve our environmental and climate change policies.

However, we must be cognisant that the new plan has very high targets, 10,000 homes more than we are working to at the moment (that is 3 Wallingfords), and the minute it gets adopted our housing land supply will drop from 10 years to 5 years. That means we can show that for only 5 years will developers be likely to build to our targets. If they slow the rate of build, perhaps because the housing market dips, then the 'housing land supply' is said to fail and developers can make speculative applications for even more development land.

We have suffered this enough in South Oxfordshire. Speculative development has created permissions for 16,000 homes in-train to be built, double the number we can even fill according to the Office of National Statistics.

The plan allocates land for 40,000 homes (10 new Wallingfords), land which cannot be unallocated; this will be catastrophic for South Oxfordshire. We at CEAC will do what we can to improve the climate and environmental policies, but these will not be enough to protect our district from environmental destruction.

53 Apologies for absence

It was noted that Councillor Newton was on leave.

54 Minutes of the last meeting

There were some amends requested, which the Democratic Services officer will apply before publication. The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting, and the chair will sign them as such.

Amendments:

Item 48, bullet point 10 – should read Oxfordshire County Council, and remove OxLEP. Suggested use of acronyms.

55 Declarations of interest

No declarations

56 Urgent business

The first item discussed under urgent business was nominations for a task and finish group for a meeting this Thursday, 6 August, to work on climate and biodiversity policies with planning policy.

Resolved:

This meeting was confirmed for 2pm, and the councillors who were interested in attending were Jo Robb, Sue Roberts, Celia Wilson, Simon Hewerdine, Sue Cooper, Sam Casey-Rerhaye and Sarah Gray. Councillor Gillespie had also been invited.

The second discussion in urgent business was an item raised in the previous meeting on 29 June 2020, regarding obtaining legal advice. Councillor Sue Roberts had been given advice, from Head of Legal and Democratic Services, that they will not commission specialist legal advice. However, the Planning Policy team will bring forward a report after the Local Plan examination.

The committee discussed timescales – there was some concern that the report would be too late, and the committee wants to find out if they can have this information any sooner. It was suggested that the committee could ask the Programme officer for the timescales, in order for the committee to contribute comments.

If there are no internal advice options, the committee agreed that finding an external advisor could be an option. Suggestions included Client Earth, Local Government Association and Plan B (planb.earth).

Resolved:

That the Chair would ask Legal and Democratic to provide any information they have that makes up the planning report on climate change that has been referred to, ideally for the Thursday meeting of CEAC members with the planning officers, or as soon as possible.

Additionally, because it is believed that we no specific climate expertise in our planning department, we seek to commission legal advice from an environmental analyst - that person to be proposed by the committee - to ensure the legality of climate policies in the emerging Local Plan.

Motion:

The CEAC is in agreement that if necessary, the committee can use the one-year work programme underspend towards legal advice to input into possible sustainability amendments to the Local Plan inspection.

The committee agreed unanimously.

The third item for discussion under urgent business was the active travel funding from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

Discussion was had regarding how the committee could generate some “iconic” project ideas to send to OCC, via the Committee chair, Councillor Sue Cooper as Leader, and Cycle Champion, Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye.

The cycle route ideas raised in the meeting were:

1. Science Vale strategic network cycle route– Didcot Parkway station to Milton Park, to include Mendip Heights.
2. Chinnor to Thame
3. Thame to Haddenham
4. Also, Pedestrianisation Wallingford was championed by committee chair – however apparently the parish council didn’t agree with the idea.

57 Update from the Task and Finish group

The committee was updated on the work of the task and finish groups.

There were three held recently, as follows:

1. The Planning design guide was the subject of the task and finish group on 13 July – an update was given from Councillor Casey-Rerhaye. The group was given an introduction on the timescales, and the guide was planned to be ready mid-2021. It

needs to link to national design guidance. It is a material planning consideration in planning application, but it is not the same as in the Local Plan. It was discussed how task and finish would feed into this. The committee were informed that there was a meeting chat set up by Marta Bou Fernandez in Planning, it has been sent as a separate Microsoft teams chat link called teams forum. Councillor Casey-Rerhaye informed that she contributed to the forum with information about Town and Country Planning Association and the Royal Town Planning Institute, who have developed climate change guide for planners, also Living with Beauty and NPPF also.

2. On 20th July, Dominic Lamb discussed ecology with a task and finish group. Committee chair Sue Roberts updated the committee on this. Work has started on creating Nature Recovery Networks, this came about in the 25-year environment plan of 2019 and is mentioned in the Environment Bill. The work has been done by Thames Valley Record Centre (TVRC). There is a map which will be shared. It covers South Oxfordshire and shows where to start putting funding towards improvements. Tree planting map will be ready by the end of 2020, completed by TVRC. There will be an Office for Environmental Protection – and an upgrade to a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. A report will be created in 3-5 years by the District. All developments need a 10% biodiversity net gain. Local Planning Authorities should register land with conservation covenants. We are publishing a local nature recovery strategy, and it must include the networks in it.
3. The report commissioned with Aether was reviewed by the task and finish group. The methodology used for the baseline carbon emissions was reviewed and the group were content with the methodology. The committee acknowledge this, but could not recommend the report to Cabinet, as they had not seen it. The committee are happy for Aether to continue with the next stage of work. The presentation slides were requested. It was noted that air travel wasn't included as it is out of our influence.

Resolved: To note that the Aether report methodology was presented to the task and finish group. The committee notes the verbal reports for the three task and finish groups.

58 Public participation

None.

59 Future agenda items

Several items have now been identified for CEAC review, including Oxfordshire ARC, Community Infrastructure Levy, Power Purchase Agreement and England's Economic Heartland Consultation.

The committee needs to reprioritise the work programme soon, as of the next meeting.

It was also confirmed that a meeting would be held in September, and then roughly six week intervals, with other meetings set for late October and then December 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Chairman

Date