

Climate and Ecological Emergencies Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

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Climate Action Plan 2021-24: Development process

Recommendation

(a) That CEEAC recommends the proposed developed process for the Climate Action Plan to cabinet

Purpose of Report

1. To outline the proposed development process for the South Oxfordshire Climate Action Plan 2021-24 and internal governance structure to support development and implementation once the plan is approved.

Strategic Objectives

2. The Council has set a target to become carbon neutral in its own operations by 2025 and to become a carbon neutral district by 2030. The new South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2020-24 states: *“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 programme 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.”*
3. The Corporate Plan has a priority theme of Action on the Climate Emergency. It includes an action to: Develop an annually approved climate emergency

programme and adequately finance it (ACE 2). A strategic Climate Action Plan will set out the priority actions required to make positive progress towards these targets over the next three years.

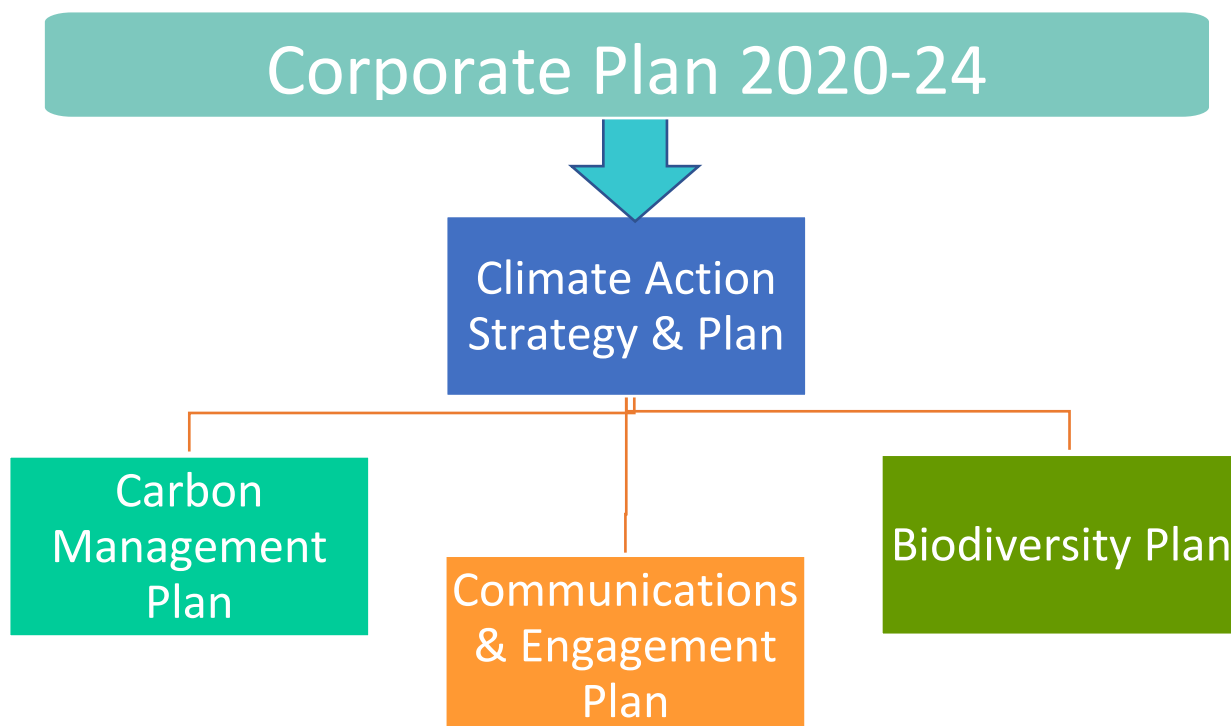
Background

4. South Oxfordshire Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019. This was followed by the establishment of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee which first met in autumn 2019. The committee's remit is to advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
5. In February 2021 the Council declared an ecological emergency and the name of the committee has been changed to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee to reflect this. The Climate Action Plan framework set out below will also address the need to progress the nature protection and recovery theme in the Corporate Plan with a proposed longer-term Biodiversity Plan.
6. The year one climate emergency work programme (2020/21) has focussed on foundational work that will enable us to set baselines and model different scenarios that will set out the respective pathways for achieving the carbon neutral targets for the councils and districts. This work is scheduled to be completed in April/May 2021. A glidepath tool is being developed for charting carbon reductions for the council. An external contractor, Anthesis, is conducting a scenario modelling exercise for district wide carbon reductions, which will be presented to Councillors and SMT on 12 May 2021.
7. In December 2020, CEEAC members and officers completed a review of the year one climate emergency work programme and identified priorities for carrying forward to 2021/22 alongside new projects identified in the Corporate Plan. Each project was also assessed and rated in terms of (i) its carbon/biodiversity impact and (iii) deliverability.
8. As well as feeding into the preparation of the Climate Action Plan, this review and planning work was used to inform the preparation of the 21/22 Work Programme, which brings together Corporate Plan projects agreed in the budgets set by the Councils and other work priorities for Climate Action officers. The 21/22 Work Programme will be presented to the CEEAC meeting in April.
9. The Vale of White Horse is similarly developing a Climate Action Plan and it is recognised that with the shared operational arrangements, there will be a number of shared actions in reducing both Council's carbon emissions.

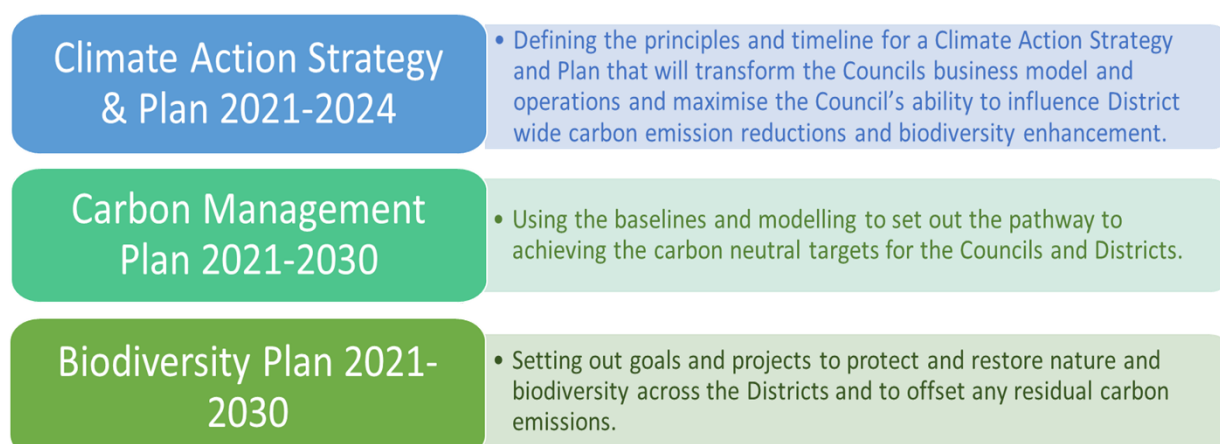
Main subject of report

10. The key purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to set out the pathway and specific actions that the Councils will take towards achieving the respective climate emergency targets for the Councils and the district.
10. The Climate Action Plan will include alignment, as appropriate, to global, national and county wide policies and strategies. These include the Paris Climate Goals, Climate Change Committee (Sixth Carbon Budget), UK Net Zero Strategy, Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Oxfordshire Growth Board. It will also be aligned at district level to the carbon neutral scenarios produced by Anthesis.

11. The Climate Action Plan will be directly informed by the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and will span the remaining period of the current administrations to 2024. The Climate Action Plan will set out the high-level strategy and priority actions over the three-year period to 2024 and will be supported by two detailed longer-term plans; a Biodiversity Plan and Carbon Management Plan. This framework will be supported by a Climate Action Communications and Engagement Plan.



12. This framework will create a holistic and joined up approach to addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies.



13. The key elements of the development process are set out in the diagram below:



13. The Climate Action Plans will be developed through a participative and consultative internal and external process. The preparation of the plans will be coordinated by the Insight & Policy and Community Enablement teams. The development team will coordinate the preparation of the Climate Action Plan and stakeholder consultation.

14. Effective and joined-up internal governance will be key to the successful development and implementation of the Climate Action Plans. Further information on the proposed internal governance arrangements are detailed in Appendix 1. A summary of how the different member and office groups will be involved in development and/or implementation of the Climate Action Plans is set out in the table below:

DEVELOPMENT: April - September 2021	ROLE	IMPLEMENTATION: October 2021 - March 2024	ROLE
Cabinet	Approval	Cabinet	Review
Member Reference Group	Oversight		
CEEAC/CEAC	Advice	CEEAC/CEAC	Monitoring
Senior Management Steering Group	Strategic alignment & planning	Senior Management Steering Group	Strategic delivery
		Officer Working\ Group	Operational delivery
		Green Champions	Engagement
Development Team	Insight, coordination, consultation		
Insight & Policy Climate Action Leads	Thematic leadership	Insight & Policy Climate Action Leads	Thematic leadership

15. Informal member reference groups will provide political oversight and guidance in developing the Climate Action Plans. These will be convened by the respective leads for Corporate Services and Transformation. Proposed membership is:

SOUTH:

Andrea Powell, Cabinet lead for Corporate Services and Transformation
Sue Cooper, South Cabinet lead for climate and environment
Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Chair, South CEEAC

VALE:

Debby Hallett, Cabinet lead for Corporate Services and Transformation
Catherine Webber, Vale Cabinet member for climate and environment
David Grant, Chair, Vale CEAC

16. A new senior management Climate Action Steering Group is being established to give strategic advice on the priority actions, resources and governance arrangements required to ensure effective delivery of the Climate Action Plan.

17. The timeline for developing and approving the Climate Action Plans (CAP) is as follows:

	TASK	OUTPUTS	DELIVERY DATE BY
1	Draft framework and outline content for Climate Action Plans	Officer steering group and reference group agree framework and outline content for Climate Action Plan	26 Mar
2	CAP development document finalised for South CEEAC and Vale CEAC meetings	CEEAC/CEAC briefing papers	1 April
3	Prepare initial first drafts of CAP, utilising baseline and modelling data together and best practice from other district councils	Feedback from reference group and steering group	30 April
4	Prepare second drafts of CAP with costings	Input from steering group	28 May
5	Internal consultation led by senior officer group	Workshop with the steering group Online staff engagement – webinars, video clips and round table sessions	June 2021
6	Public consultation on key elements of test version of CAP	Workshop event with town and parish councils and separate event for residents to gain feedback on the test version and to share latest updates and next steps.	June 2021
7	Analyse consultation findings and prepare final draft CAP	Final draft CAP considered by South CEEAC and Vale CEAC	Aug 2021
8	Make any changes to final drafts recommended by CEEAC/CEAC	CEEAC/CEAC recommended CAPs presented to Cabinet for approval	Sep 2021
9	Prepare growth bids for subsequent budget rounds as appropriate	Councils allocate adequate funding to deliver Climate Action Plan	tbc

10	Prepare a Communications & Engagement Plan	Integration with corporate Comms & Engagement Plans	Oct 2021
11	Design public version of CAP plus summary document	External version published and supported by ongoing comms	Oct 2021
12	Member and officer conference on Climate Action Plan	Promote plan. Explain governance. Discuss delivery and monitoring.	Oct 2021
13	Biodiversity Steering Group to develop a 10-year Biodiversity Plan	Plans considered by CEEAC/CEAC and recommended to cabinet for approval	tbc
14	Prepare a 10-year Carbon Management Plan	Plans considered by CEEAC/CEAC and recommended to cabinet for approval	tbc

Climate and ecological impact implications

18. The development and implementation of a Climate Action Plan and supporting framework is explicitly designed to achieve positive climate and ecological outcomes. It is understood that embedding consideration of climate and ecological impacts across all Council decision making and project development is an important step towards reducing carbon emissions and making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in South Oxfordshire.

Financial Implications

18. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For South, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £4.3 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus).

19. This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.

Legal Implications

20. Carbon neutrality itself is not a legal requirement and consequently there is no legal duty for the Council to undertake actions and activities to achieve this.

21. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise in respect of individual projects included within the subsequent work programme as they are scoped, approved by Cabinet and implemented. These will be subject to identification and appropriate action as required.

Risks

22. Sustaining and increasing staffing capacity and project funding to implement climate action projects that will reduce council and district carbon emissions and protect and restore nature will be essential in ensuring that the Climate Action Plan

can be delivered. There is a risk that the necessary resources and funding will not be made available to deliver the Climate Action Plan.

23. There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not deliver, or make substantial progress towards delivering, on its climate emergency commitments.

Other Implications

24. None

Conclusion

25. The report describes the proposed process for developing a South Oxfordshire Climate Action Plan 2021-24.
26. That CEEAC recommends the proposed development process for the Climate Action Plan to Cabinet.

Background Papers

Appendix 1

Climate Action Plans: internal governance and delivery

Rationale: Both Councils have declared climate emergencies, have ambitious carbon reduction targets and are developing Climate Action Plans. Climate action is also embedded throughout both corporate plans and therefore we need internal governance structures to ensure accountability, guide projects and strategic objectives, and to deliver the plans.

In terms of governance, South council has a Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) and Vale council a Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC), which are made up of councillors who advise and provide recommendations to the Cabinets on climate action.

Senior managers meet regularly at SMT meetings to discuss all council programmes of work and the SMT has appointed a strategic lead officer for climate matters, Suzanne Malcolm. In the Gateway 1 report on Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, it suggests the formulation of a project group to support the Climate Emergency Advisory Committees' function to advise Cabinet on matters relating to climate change.

To successfully deliver both council's Climate Action Plans, support and input from senior colleagues, collaboration with operational colleagues, and clear information and guidance to all staff will be needed. Therefore, it is proposed to develop a climate action steering group of senior managers, a working group with operational colleagues and a more informal group of green champions. It will be important for these groups to work in a joined-up way.

The Climate Action steering group will inform the development of the Climate Action Plan. An operational delivery group will be formed to help implement the Plan

internally and Green Champions will be appointed to develop ideas and inspire staff engagement on climate action.

Once the Climate Action Plan is approved there will be an all staff briefing on the Plan which will outline the content as well as informing staff on what this means for their work. Following on from the conference, staff training will be issued, working with HR on developing and implementing this. It is also recommended for the climate action team to attend meetings with different teams across the council to work with the teams on their climate action ideas and how they might integrate it into their work. Having done this with a few teams so far, it has already generated a lot of ideas and interest in climate action, as well as reducing silo working.

An online webinar with Councillors will take place to inform them about the Climate Action Plan, including the targets and content, and then opening up discussions on how councillors can support the plan and how to engage with residents and local organisations on it.

Climate Action Steering Group

Purpose: to advise on the development of the Climate Action Plans and to provide strategic oversight and performance monitoring of the Climate Action Plans and the Corporate Plan climate objectives

Responsibilities:

- Strategic oversight and input of the Climate Action Plans and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Performance monitoring of the Climate Action Plan deliverables and climate objectives in the Corporate Plans
- Sharing information with teams and supporting them to deliver Climate Action Plan projects and programmes
- Support with resource allocation for Climate Action Plan projects and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Make recommendations to CEACs on matters relating to the climate emergency

Meetings: quarterly and to take place before CEAC meetings to discuss relevant actions. After CEAC meetings, the Climate Action Team will share a summary of discussions and key actions to the steering group to keep them informed and aware of urgent actions.

Members:

Name	Role
Suzanne Malcolm, Chair	Acting Deputy Chief Exec - place
Michelle Wells	Insight and Policy Manager
James Carpenter	Interim Head of Corporate Services
<i>Vacant</i>	Head of Development and Regeneration
Liz Hayden	Head of Housing and Environment
Adrian Duffield	Head of Planning
Adrianna Partridge	Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Transformation and Operations

Climate Action Working Group

Purpose: operationalising and delivering on the Climate Action Plans and climate objectives of the Corporate Plans

Responsibilities:

- Operationalising and delivering on Climate Action Plan projects and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Collaborative working with colleagues on Climate Action Plan projects, including providing input and ideas on new and existing projects
- Information sharing on projects with colleagues at meetings and communicating updates to their teams after meetings

Meetings: quarterly, after steering group meetings; task and finish groups or ad hoc working group meetings can be arranged when needed

Members:

Name	Role
Michelle Wells, Chair	Insight and Policy Manager
Andy Egan	Climate Action Lead
Elizabeth Kingdom	Climate Action Lead
Heather Saunders	Corporate Energy Officer
Melanie Smans	Economic Development and Active Communities Manager
Catrin Mathias	Property Manager
Jayne Bolton	Infrastructure and Development Manager
Marybeth Harasz	Didcot Garden Town Manager
Lisa Selby	Waste Team Leader
Lucy Murfett	Planning Policy Manager
Dominic Lamb	Planning Specialist Team Leader
Cynthia Calvert	Private Sector Housing Team Leader
John Backley	Technical Services Manager
Shona Ware	Community Enablement Manager
TBC	Interim Communications Lead Officer

Green Champions

Purpose: an informal group to inspire and engage with interested staff on sustainability and the Climate Action Plans, and to support them to encourage their teams and colleagues to incorporate climate action into their work

Responsibilities:

- Develop ideas and plans to engage colleagues in the climate agenda and the Climate Action Plans
- To be informed on Climate Action Plan updates and opportunities to be involved in relevant projects
- Share climate action information and guidance with their wider teams and networks

Members: Colleagues from any department and level to join at their own interest

Meetings: every 2-3 months, depending on colleague interest and projects