

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Listening Learning Leading

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2019

MEETING ROOM 1 – 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK OX14 4SB

Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)
Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Kate Gregory, Caroline Newton,
David Rouane and Celia Wilson

Officers

Paul Bateman, Chloe Bunting, Andrew Down, Emily Hamerton, Heather Saunders,
Michelle Wells and Donna Worrall.

Also present:

Leigh Rawlins

13 Chair's announcements

Chair's Statement

The Chair made a statement to the committee, explaining that due to the General Election purdah period, the committee was unable to discuss its agenda item on "Climate Actions".

The Chair continued her statement:

"What we had hoped to talk about today was Deep Adaptation. I circulated a paper to you all on the near-future impacts that Global Heating shall have, and indeed already is having, on our lives. It is not hard to appreciate that the current floods in the Midlands and the North are having huge and tragic impacts on the lives of our people. What is harder to see is what scientists are describing as breakdowns in society within the next 10 years which will affect even affluent countries like ours.

We must consider a vision for the future. It is so easy to believe that a zero-carbon future will plunge us back into cave-man days, but there are huge financial gains to be made by living in a fairer sharing economy, within our means in the sense of resources and planetary boundaries, and living with, rather than battling against, the natural world, of which we are a part. We expect to run a workshop day early next year in which we can develop a council vision.

As for adaptation, personally, I have never given much thought to adapting to climate change as opposed to trying to prevent it, as I had not thought of the food and water shortages, and other deprivations that are already built into the system. This, I hope will be something that we will give serious attention to as soon as the election is over, in our leadership role in protecting the people of South Oxfordshire."

14 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Lynn Lloyd, Ian White and Jane Murphy (the latter's substitute).

15 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 19 September 2019 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign these as such, subject to showing David Rouane as Director of 10:10 Climate Action.

16 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17 Urgent business

There was no urgent business

18 Progress of Task and Finish Group

The Insight and Policy Manager reported on the progress which had been made by the task and finish group. The group had met on 8 October 2019 to progress the strategy and commission work. The committee recalled that at their first meeting they had agreed the seven themes and items to be considered as options for inclusion in a coherent work programme. The group had commenced scoping and evaluating the Themes and three external organisations had been consulted, who were advising the council on cost factors. Internal expertise was also being drawn upon, to evaluate options and provide evaluations on resources and delivery. The council's procurement team were also being consulted.

Important work is being undertaken to validate the council's carbon emissions baseline, to ensure that the data was accurate and reliable. The group will be organising a workshop where the Vision and targets would be scoped. There will also be a conference event to launch the Vision and Strategy. The group had agreed to next meet on 18 December 2019, following completion of the options evaluation work and their costing. The committee agreed that they required a meeting in January 2020, to receive the task and finish group's progress report and work programme recommendations, which would inform their recommendations to Cabinet and feed into the budget setting process in February 2020.

Liaison with outside organisations

The committee considered that engagement with the farming sector would be critical in helping to achieve its aims and objectives and to ensure resilience in local food production.

The Insight and Policy Manager also reported that the Council has been successful in securing student consultancy support, as part of a programme run by Oxford university. We will be engaging with a group of students to capture their creativity and fresh ideas on strategies and techniques to encourage behaviour change in order to achieve the challenging targets and use their skills to create a data pack of information to tell the compelling story around the urgency of climate change and adaptation. Once completed, this data pack will be hosted on 'Oxfordshire Insight'.

The Insight and Policy Manager and the Energy Strategy and Projects Officer had presented to a climate change conference on South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils' responses to climate emergency. The presentation was well-received and confirmed that the approaches were aligned with other councils' priorities and was ahead of some others.

The council had just signed up to the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) Energy Service, which provided access to information and events and guaranteed councillor places (for both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils) at the APSE annual conference. The Energy Strategy and Projects Officer would be sending full details of the conference to the committee.

On 19 November 2019 an all-Oxfordshire (district councils and county council) collaboration meeting had been held. The aim was to foster stronger joint working, and discussions revealed some inevitable overlap in councils' working arrangements, particularly in work commissioning. The meeting had concurred that economies of scale opportunities could be realised and that further discussions were required on this issue. The baseline work seemed to be an appropriate topic for this treatment.

The Insight and Policy Manager also reported that the Oxford City Citizens' Assembly report would be publicly available within the next few days and was recommended reading for councillors. The council would be working with the City Council about the results of the Assembly process and it was likely that this council could enrich their data.

The work of the council on climate change had evoked a high level of interest from towns, villages and groups in South Oxfordshire. Insight and Policy Officers The task and finish group would be meeting each of the town councils of Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford within the next few weeks, to understand what activity they may have been carrying out in this area, share the progress of the Council and explain the work and offer advice and assistance, leading to collaboration on the topic .

The committee were keen to engage closely with environment – related groups, particularly those for younger people. It was confirmed that Insight and Policy had completed a research mapping exercise on climate action groups; the council already had contacts with the Youth Climate Network and Extinction Rebellion. The Insight and Policy Manager would share her spreadsheet of 58 groups with the committee with an ask that members advise if there were other suitable groups for inclusion in the spreadsheet. The committee agreed that an effective Communications Plan was of critical importance. The new council website would be launched in January 2020, greatly assisting with these issues. The committee were also keen to ensure that full opportunity was taken of the available social media to promote the work and ambition of the committee. The Committee requested a list of suggestions for individuals to take action on the website.

Following the election and the imposition of the purdah rules, the council would write to town and parish councils and community groups to understand what activity they may be

carrying out and update on the work of the committee, about its work and how those organisations could benefit from this. The committee queried whether the council could assist parishes with climate emergency auditing. It was noted that a web page would also be established.

Additionally, the council's scrutiny structures would be formally consulted as a critical friend. It was noted that the Task and Finish Group had been invited to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 21 January 2020.

Next steps

The group planned to report its provisional standards to the Cabinet in December 2019. The committee hoped that it could receive a progress report from the group on this work.

The committee noted that Vale of White Horse's corresponding committee was proposing to undertake a two-stage approach to their climate emergency targets. The Acting Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the differences in approach would not affect South Oxfordshire's pace, and that two sets of targets could be comfortably accommodated in this part of Oxfordshire.

The Group was exploring how higher standards could be met in the council's service areas. For example, the taxi licensing policy could be reviewed to offer incentives for electric vehicles, perhaps by exacting a lower fee, but ensuring that such changes would be reasonable and practical. Scoping was proceeding on related infrastructure issues, including charging points. The committee requested creation of a work programme for the Committee for future planning of agenda items.

Future meetings of the Advisory Committee

The committee expressed a wish to review the car parks fees and charges proposals and to advise Cabinet by 30 January 2020 of their views. The committee would be interested in measures to encourage electric vehicles and to discourage fossil fuel ones. Also, the committee would like to be consulted on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending, where biodiversity issues would be of primary importance.

It was noted that the council's grounds maintenance contract would shortly be re-tendered and that may contain aspects of which the Committee could advise on. Due to governance timescales, briefings will be held in respect of this item with the relevant Portfolio Holders, Head of Service and the Committee Chair.

19 Terms of Reference

The committee discussed its terms of reference and a view was expressed that as the committee would be commissioning work in future, it would be preferable to have its own delegated budget. The Acting Deputy Chief Executive - Partnership and Planning reported that the Constitutional Review Working Group could review the terms of reference for the committee. The committee were reminded that the practice in the council is that budgets are delegated to officers who manage expenditure in accordance with the priorities set by councillors. Looking forward, the committee would need to aim for the budget cycle for the next financial year.

20 Future Homes Standard

The Cabinet member attended the committee for this item. The development manager and the senior building control officer introduced this item. The committee had received a full copy of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on the Future Homes Standard. The consultation period was from 1 October 2019 to 10 January 2020.

The government had made a commitment to introduce a Future Homes Standard, by 2025 for 'new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world leading levels of energy efficiency'. Energy efficiency requirements for new homes were set by Part L and Part 6 of the Building Regulations. The consultation of which this was the first of two parts, would also cover airtightness and improving the 'as built' performance of the constructed home.

The committee concurred that the focus on new build quality was to be supported, and a simpler compliance regime would assist designers and architects to fully understand the new standards, and work towards meeting them. A welcome innovation was the proposed requirement for the home occupier to complete a report certifying that the dwelling complied with the building regulations. Members questioned why the Future Homes proposals did not require the zero carbon homes that would be required to meet the council's climate emergency targets. The standards proposed in the Future Homes consultation were lower.

The Chair requested that the council should respond to the consultation by stating that a universal national standard for zero carbon homes would be easier to manage than individual councils having to request and justify these zero carbon standards themselves. The committee agreed with officers that if the government were to set the standards proposed in the Future Homes Standard, these might not be high enough and they would wish to have the opportunity to set their own higher standards

The Part F (Ventilation) Regulations would benefit from a comprehensive update, as they were difficult to understand in their present form. The committee agreed with the development manager when she suggested that responding to the consultation by letter was the most effective way of providing considered views, as the Council could focus on local priorities, such as; concentrating on affordable homes, supporting housebuilders and encouraging the highest building standards. Under any new building regulation regime, an avoidance of self-certification would be a priority. Additionally, it was important for the new regulations to refer to extensions and loft conversions.

Caroline Newton left the meeting at this time and took no further part in the discussions.

The committee considered that the question posed by paragraph 2.28, about the re-wording of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 to deal with a new energy efficiency standard, required a carefully worded response, as it did not seem appropriate for the council to agree a lower standard in the regulations.

Stefan Gawrysiak left the meeting at this time and took no further part in the discussions.

The committee was concerned that private inspectors should be required to comply with South Oxfordshire District Council standards. In its ongoing work, the council should liaise with the town and parish councils and encourage them to undertake a baseline audit on energy usage.

The committee recognised that the consultation period had only a short time to run and it might be necessary to communicate views via the Cabinet or Cabinet member.

21 Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for following item of business Part 1 of Schedule 12A 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

(i) It involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing this information;

Crowmarsh Council Offices Project – Sustainability Options

22 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the confidential minutes of the first meeting of the advisory committee held on 19 September 2019, relating to 'Crowmarsh Council Offices Project – Sustainability Options', as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign these as such.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chairman

Date