

# Agenda



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Listening Learning Leading

## A MEETING OF THE

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY 26 APRIL 2021 AT 4.00 PM

THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL, ONLINE MEETING.

Watch the meeting live here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

## Members of the Committee:

### Councillors

Sam Casey-Rerhaye -Chair

Sue Cooper  
Stefan Gawrysiak  
Kate Gregory  
Lynn Lloyd

Jane Murphy  
Caroline Newton  
Andrea Powell  
Leigh Rawlins

Sue Roberts  
David Rouane  
Celia Wilson

### Substitutes

Ken Arlett  
Robin Bennett  
Maggie Filipova-Rivers  
Elizabeth Gillespie  
Sarah Gray  
Victoria Haval

Lorraine Hillier  
Kellie Hinton  
Alexandrine Kantor  
Mocky Khan  
Axel Macdonald

Jo Robb  
Anne-Marie Simpson  
Alan Thompson

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## **1 Chair's announcements**

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

## **2 Apologies for absence**

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

## **3 Appointment of a Vice-chair**

To appoint a vice chair of the committee.

## **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 chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent.

## **6 Minutes of the last meeting** (Pages 4 - 8)

To review the minutes of the meeting on 30 November 2020 and if agreed, for the chair to sign them as a correct record.

## **7 Public participation**

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

## **8 CEEAC review** (Pages 9 - 17)

For the committee to review and note the key findings from the recent review into the effectiveness of the CEEAC and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Lead Officer: Michelle Wells

Introduced by Cabinet Member: Councillor Andrea Powell

## **9 Climate Action Plan Development** (Pages 18 - 26)

For the committee to review 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.

For the committee to make recommendations to Cabinet.

Lead Officer: Andy Egan

Introduced by Cabinet Member: Councillor Andrea Powell

**10 2021/22 Climate Action and Biodiversity Work Programme** (Pages 27 - 41)

To review the programme of work and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Lead Officer: Michelle Wells and introduction from Councillor Sue Cooper

**11 South Oxfordshire - Ecological Emergency Declaration and Biodiversity Steering Group** (Pages 42 - 51)

For committee to review a report on the proposed implementation of the resolutions included in the Ecological Emergency declaration passed at the Council meeting held on 11 February 2021 and;

For committee to review the terms of reference for the proposed Biodiversity Steering Group and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Lead Officer: Andy Egan

Introduced by Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (Chair)

**12 DEFRA Consultation launched on environmental principles**

Please click on this link and review the consultation documents contained here:

[Consultation launched on environmental principles](#)

Additionally, the appointment of a Task and Finish group.

Introduced by Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye

**13 Trust for Oxfordshire Environment presentation**

A presentation to the committee regarding Trust for Oxfordshire Environment

Introduced by Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye

**14 Task and finish group update**

This item is an opportunity to provide any updates from existing task and finish groups.

MARGARET REED

Head of Legal and Democratic

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

## Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2020

### Present

Sue Roberts (Chair)  
Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Sarah Gray, Kate Gregory, Lynn Lloyd, Jane Murphy, Caroline Newton and Celia Wilson

### Officers

Andy Egan, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells.

### Also present:

Cabinet member for corporate services, Councillor Andrea Powell.

### 81 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed Andy Egan, the new Climate Change Lead for South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). The chair addressed the committee:

“First and foremost, let me welcome Andy Egan to the Council. Andy is our new Climate Change Lead Officer. Amongst councillors, we have lost Simon Hewardine from the Committee because he has resigned from Council, in a move to the Channel Islands.

Today, the Government has launched its scheme to support farmers for making environmental improvements to their land, in a post-Brexit world. Rather than subsidies paid out for the amount of land that a farm has, it will make Environmental Land Management payments (ELM). This is a welcome step forward, although perhaps too little and too slow.

Environmental management pays dividends. The restoration of a ghost-pond in Norfolk has disturbed the dormant seeds of the grass-poly. The grass-poly in bloom has delighted locals as the plant has not been seen in Norfolk for over a hundred years. Meanwhile in Exmoor, beavers have been re-introduced. They have set to work and built the first beaver-dam in Exmoor for 400 years. Let us bring success stories like this to South Oxfordshire.

The Government has also launched its 10-point plan for a green recovery, with much that is laudable in it. Unfortunately, a key decision to stop bringing gas to new homes by 2023 was removed from the plan post-hoc as being too onerous for developers.

We head towards the adoption vote for the Local Plan on December 10th. The extremely high number of homes will increase the housing here by over 50%, trashing the Green Belt. Our Executive has advised that should Council vote against adopting the plan, it is likely that a Commissioner would be appointed to take over all activities of Council. Councillors would be sacked.

As the targets are very high, our land supply will quickly fail (remember land supply does not mean supply of land, it means the number of homes that will be built). When we fail to meet targets, we lay ourselves open to speculative bids for more land. In anticipation of our new plan, developers have already offered to 'help us out' in meeting targets, with bids for more land around Didcot. Of course, all land covered with concrete is lost forever to nature restoration.

The Government's Future Homes Standard which was meant to take effect in 2020, the same year that a belated consultation on it came out, languishes in some dusty corner of Whitehall. We continue to build new homes oozing out five tonnes (T) of carbon dioxide a year for their lifetime, and responsible for 50-100T just in their construction phase. Developers lobbied for the 2016 change to zero carbon building regulations to be stopped. Presumably they still play the same game.

The Government's Green Grant scheme offering £5000-£10,000 to householders for insulation and renewables has failed to come up with the goods. The scheme was supposed to start on the 1st September. I wish to install an air sourced heat pump in our home. I had to get a quote from an installer and apply for a government voucher. Works cannot begin until I receive the voucher. I applied 3 weeks ago and nothing has come through. We anticipate a very cold winter with our broken boiler. At the time of application, our installer told us that government had failed to issue any vouchers at all, two and a half months into what was then a 6-month scheme. I do not know if this is so.

One of the problems with retrofit installations is that the boom and bust and short-term nature of government incentives since 2010 have put people, including myself, out of business. It will take years to build up the industry. We are hoping that OxLEP and South Oxfordshire can take a lead on this."

## **82 Apologies for absence**

Councillor David Rouane tendered apologies.

## **83 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **84 Urgent business**

Under urgent business, the committee looked at a letter sent to Council Leader Sue Cooper, from Friends of the Earth (FoE). They have created a blueprint for changes needed to deliver on climate change.

It was agreed that the committee wanted more time to consider the contents, and members were asked to respond to the chair by email by Wednesday 1 December that Sue Cooper should write to FoE with support for their efforts to ask government for more council funding to do our vital climate and nature work.

**RESOLVED: to**

Respond to the chair by email by Wednesday 1 December to confirm that Sue Cooper should write to FoE to show support for their efforts.

## **85 Public participation**

There were no public speakers.

## **86 Minutes**

It was agreed that review of the minutes of the meeting on 28 October would be deferred to the next meeting, as the committee had not had enough time to consider them.

## **87 Circular economy**

The Policy and Insight Manager introduced the paper on the circular economy. Also present was Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Andrea Powell. Who would take on board any comments raised.

The committee considered the contents and made the following comments and suggested ideas:

- We need to think about what we ask of the council, and where we get the funding from.
- Previously, waste centre staff separated items that could be repurposed. Make, recycle, reform.
- High Wycombe is an example.
- It was asked if officers could make suggestions. What next?
- The committee discussed how recycling targets can be very hard to meet if we are reducing use as well.
- Officer added that this is key policy thinking, an opportunity to advise Cabinet on how to incorporate into the corporate plan.
- There is opportunity to review waste contracts, percentage recycling targets are not the best measure. A view was expressed that energy use around recycling contract is not ideal, for example, transporting recycling to Edmonton, London.
- Look towards reduction and reuse instead.
- We need to retrain and reduce overconsumption.
- Obsolescence – repurposing of redundant activities.
- The committee discussed how to assist farmers with regenerative farming. Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB) was cited as a useful contact for engaging farmers.
- Community Action Groups – funded via County Council. Focus on waste, restoration cafés.
- Electric vehicles – car clubs. We want active transport. Private ownership of cars is incompatible with climate emergency.
- Embedding – mention of One Planet Living and doughnut economics.
- Funding issues for community buses.
- We need to influence supermarkets to reduce their waste.

Councillor Powell summed up that there will be projects each year the plan progresses, including investigation of the ideas raised – engage waste contractors, educational programmes, practical engagement, young enterprise, advising business (could approach the South and Vale business team), investigate car club options, contact Trust of Environment (TOE) – bring them in to help develop partnership groups.

## **88 One-year work programme progress update**

Insight and Policy Manager updated the committee on the workshop held on 26 November.

The workshop was attended by CEAC chair, vice chair, Councillor Sue Cooper and Councillor Robin Bennett.

The workshop was to review the progress of the one-year work programme. The group identified projects that are pertinent to carry forward. Create a timeline for climate action plan / strategy.

They went through the pre-existing list and aligned it to the corporate plan.

## **89 Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy update**

Councillor Caroline Newton updated the committee, as a representative on the Electric Vehicle Steering Group. Councillor Newton expressed frustration at the fact that there was no meeting yet.

Councillor Newton requested detailed targets and milestones to measure ourselves against, including a strategy for rapid charging. Aiming for an update in the new year. Consideration will be given on timings and whether they align with the adoption timetable for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Climate change lead added that the work at officer level had been detailed, and across the five Oxfordshire councils. Once the detailed preparation work is approved, its ready to go. South Oxfordshire currently has the most charging points, almost three times higher than other districts.

A view was expressed that some projects have been blocked – an example being connective curbs.

It was confirmed that a meeting of the Steering Group is planned for week beginning 14 December. There is detailed behind-the-scenes work happening. Officers will feedback to County Council to get traction to get an update.

## **90 HM Government's 10-point green plan**

Committee chair spoke to the committee about the ten-point plan.

There is a rolling out of complex interventions.

There is an issue with green home grants for retrofitting.

We want to see ambition. It was suggested that we pick two or three of the points to push within our own council.

The committee expressed that it was good to see this. Councillors want to see new homes and retrofit with air source heat pumps. If we get this technology and manufacture locally we also create jobs.

Scrutiny committee are investigating green home grants and the local capacity to get the retrofitting works completed.

We need to reduce consumption everywhere.

## 91 Future work programme items

It was confirmed that there was a delay on the feasibility study into identifying opportunities to invest in solar energy off site. This is a living document and things will change.

Corporate plan deliverables will bring more detail.

There will be an electric vehicle update soon.

Chair asked for consideration to a conference.

Discussion was had around tree planting – there is some beneficial planting on new developments, but the committee discussed the difficult aspects of tree planting close to homes and the insurance issues that can arise. It was suggested that Councillors Wilson and Haval could bring Tree Protection Orders (TPO) to CEAC, and involve officers Dominic Lamb, Planning Specialist Team Leader and Matt Gulliford, Senior Tree Officer. Include tree suitability for planting. A dovetailing tree policy is needed with the Local Plan, so let's work towards having one.

Consideration was given to light pollution, with concerns raised about super lit bypasses, and the effects on people, and roosting bats and birds.

Councillor Casey-Rerhaye informed the committee that County Council have been using LED lights that have been selected for long term savings, and for the benefit of nature and sleep patterns. County officers thought through the light bandwidths to use. Do we need a light policy with County Council? Or a supplementary planning document on lighting?

Dark skies policy from CCB will be circulated.

Insight and Policy Manager updated the committee that she is part of a cross county officer group. In two weeks, she will meet with them and can raise the lighting issues discussed today.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Chairman

Date



# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

DATE: 12 April 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

## CEEAC REVIEW: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation

- (a) That committee notes key findings from the CEEAC review and agrees to put forward recommendations to Cabinet for implementation.

### Purpose of report

1. For committee to review and note the key findings from the recent review into the effectiveness of the CEEAC
2. For committee to agree and put forward recommendations that have been developed with the CEEAC review steering group within the report to Cabinet for implementation.

### Strategic objectives

3. 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."*

## **Background**

4. The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was established as a balanced cross-party committee of South Oxfordshire District Council in 2019 and held its first meeting in September of that year.
5. The role of the committee is to advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
6. With the approval of the new corporate plan last autumn and the change of name to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) in February, It was agreed that it would be prudent for committee and Cabinet members to review the effectiveness of the committee to date, and to identify recommendations for improving effectiveness and alignment to the corporate plan going forward.
7. This review was led by Cllrs Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper and Andrea Powell and supported by officers Suzanne Malcolm, Michelle Wells and Andy Egan.
8. Through a survey we asked for feedback from CEEAC members or substitutes. We asked Cabinet members in a separate survey for their views in relation to the committee's advisory role.

## **Summary**

9. This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the results of the South CEEAC review survey. Two online surveys were used, one for committee members and substitutes (CEEAC survey) and another one for Cabinet members (Cabinet survey). The internal surveys were open for two and a half weeks, between 19 February and 8 March 2021.
10. A total of 5 completed responses were received from CEEAC members and 2 from substitutes; 3 completed responses were received from Cabinet members. As there are 12 CEEAC members and 14 substitutes in total, this represents a response rate of 42% (5 out of 12) among members, and 14% (2 out of 14) among substitutes. The response rate among Cabinet members was 38% (3 out of 8).
11. The surveys were conducted to help the Insight and Policy Team review the effectiveness of the CEEAC to date. This information will be used to help inform and shape recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the committee, and to ensure that its work is aligned with the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan 2020-2024.
12. The majority of contributors to the CEEAC survey did not believe that the committee had fulfilled its advisory role to the Cabinet effectively.

13. Respondents highlighted the task and finish groups as an activity that had worked well. They specifically cited their focused work and definite outputs as major positives.
14. Significant concerns were expressed about the CEEAC's organisational and structural difficulties. It was felt that this had been an impediment to the work of the committee. There was, nevertheless, some optimism about recent changes.
15. The majority of contributors to the Cabinet survey agreed that the advice and recommendations they had received from the CEEAC had been useful – they did, however, give a more mixed response as to whether the committee had effectively fulfilled its advisory role to the Cabinet.
16. A majority of respondents believed that the CEEAC should have a greater role in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

### **Key Findings and Recommendations (CEEAC members)**

17. A majority of respondents to the CEEAC survey said that the CEEAC had not fulfilled its advisory role to the Cabinet effectively in respects of:
  - Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.
  - Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:
    - national legally binding targets on the climate emergency
    - countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)
    - the council's own targets on the climate emergency
    - the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan
  - Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.
  - Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.
  - Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.
18. CEEAC members felt that they had a limited sense of what the committee had actually achieved in a variety of areas. They believed that little progress had been made and that the committee had struggled to deliver any tangible benefits/changes.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*It is recommended that the new Chair of CEEAC seeks to clarify the role of the CEEAC to members as some disparity came through the survey, on the role and remit of the Committee. The new Chair of CEEAC would also like to set expectations about what the committee can achieve.*

19. Contributors consistently raised organisational and structural difficulties of the CEEAC as an impediment to the work of the committee. There was, nevertheless, optimism about recent changes leading to improvements. CEEAC members also felt unsupported by the low level of officer support in terms of contribution as well as seniority.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*CEEAC will now be supported by two additional officers, which will strengthen support and resource available to the committee significantly. Having CEEAC meetings structured around the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 will provide structure, a direct link to Council business and a greater sense of purpose to the meetings, going forward.*

20. Respondents were also concerned that there had been a lack of engagement (regarding what the CEEAC and council were committed to doing around climate change) with the Cabinet, the council, officers and wider community. This was cited as a potential reason for the CEEAC's perceived ineffectiveness.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*The Climate Action Plan will be supported by a dedicated communications and engagement plan, which will provide the CEEAC with many opportunities to demonstrate community leadership and share their work.*

*The CEEAC is also supported by the Council's communications team to promote and enhance the work of the Committee, through the issuing of pro-active comms before and after each meeting.*

*It is also recommended that the new website pages on Climate Action together with a potential newsletter will provide opportunities for CEEAC members to promote and provide a focus for their work for example. via blogs*

*In addition, the Town and Parish Council Forum at the end of Spring, represents a big engagement opportunity for the CEEAC as the event is focussed on climate action and biodiversity, with a number of external speakers.*

21. A majority of respondents (three out of five) believed that the CEEAC should have a greater role in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. They reasoned that the committee could do more in helping to deliver on the ambitions contained within it.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*It is recommended that the CEEAC plays a formal role in the monitoring of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and reviews the quarterly performance reports that will be set out as part of the Councils Performance Management Framework (PMF) This will*

*allow the committee to provide advice and guidance to Cabinet on the delivery of projects in relation to the climate emergency and nature restoration and protection themes. The Corporate Plan 2020-24 has been designed to be agile, so projects within the plan will bend, flex and evolve, which further supports the need for the CEEAC to play a key role in advising on its delivery.*

*Further, it is proposed that a Biodiversity Steering Group is formed that reports directly into CEEAC, this group will be central to the scoping of projects in the Corporate Plan under the nature restoration and protection theme and help to inform future discretionary growth to fund this work.*

22. Most respondents (five out of six) considered that the meetings of the CEEAC had been unproductive – concerns were expressed about disorganisation and a lack of focus.

23. The majority of contributors (six out of seven) suggested that the meetings of the CEEAC were not well structured – concerns were again expressed about a lack of focus.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*Having the Corporate Plan performance as a standing item will help to address these points. It is also planned that the CEEAC will publish a forward plan of future agenda items which will give them committee a clearer sense of direction and show CEAC members when a topic is planned to be reviewed by the CEEAC and thus create a sense of better organisation. The forward plan of future agenda items will be taken from the work programme 21/22 and developed in collaboration with the Chair of CEEAC and the Cabinet Lead.*

24. Respondents rated task and finish groups as the most useful additional method in helping the CEEAC fulfil its role. It averaged 4.00 out 5.00 compared to 3.29 for informal briefings, 3.00 for visits and 1.86 for formal training.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*Task and Finish groups will continue to be used to support this work area where appropriate. It is recommended that Task and Finish groups are assembled to work alongside officers on the Corporate Plan, communications and engagement, Zero Carbon definition and relevant consultations. They will provide opportunities to give a sense of focus and work in more detail on areas of interest for members. Each Task and Finish group created should be led by a CEEAC member to facilitate and manage input to the groups with feedback from Task and Finish groups as a regular standing item on all CEEAC agendas.*

25. Opinion was split over the frequency of CEEAC meetings. While two contributors believed that they should occur every two months, and one preferred once a quarter. Four respondents selected 'other' – of these, two wanted to see meetings occur every month (alternating between in-person and virtual), one believed that they should only be held when there was something to discuss and another stated that additional meetings should be arranged as and when required.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*As the response to this question was mixed it leads consideration was given to the resourcing demands around meeting co-ordination as opposed to project delivery. The CEEAC review steering group suggest that quarterly meetings would offer the right balance between meetings and delivering projects.*

26. Forming a Year One Work Programme, a climate action plan with set dates and a budget was considered to be the main achievement of the committee (mentioned by three out of five respondents). This was followed by raising awareness (two out of five) and the creation of the CEEAC (two out of five).

27. The task and finish group (two out of four) was highlighted by respondents as a thing that had worked well for specific topics as they were focused and had a definite output (like the work programme), while one contributor stated that nothing had worked well so far.

28. Contributors suggested that the following could be improved:

- Having a plan with deliverable targets and providing regular updates on progress (six out of seven)
- The chairing of meetings (three out of seven)
- Relationships with/presence at Cabinet (three out of seven)
- Creating a new department for climate (two out of seven)
- Having a Head of Service for climate change and higher officer representation (two out of seven)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*The work programme 21/22 reflects the full picture of work that will be covered in this area for the year ahead. The development of the Climate Action Plan will be supported by modelling work that will enable us to plot out a longer-term pathway to achieve our targets.*

*It is recommended that the Chair of CEEAC and Cabinet Lead for this area should report to Cabinet after each CEEAC meeting under the agenda item at Cabinet “recommendations from other committees.”*

*This area of work has moved from policy development into delivery, so consideration should be given to the longer-term management and co-ordination of the delivery of projects in this area alongside officers, CEEAC and Cabinet*

*It has already been proposed to create a Biodiversity Lead post to take forward projects under the nature restoration and protection theme and this is currently subject to future growth.*

**Key Findings and Recommendations (Cabinet members)**

29. The majority of respondents to the Cabinet survey agreed that the advice and recommendations from the CEEAC to the Cabinet had been useful.

30. There was a mixed response when it came to how effectively respondents felt that the CEEAC had fulfilled its advisory role in respects of:

- Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.
- Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:
  - national legally binding targets on the climate emergency
  - countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)
  - the council's own targets on the climate emergency
  - the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan
- Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.
- Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.
- Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

31. Concerns were consistently raised about a lack of information being shared clearly and consistently with Cabinet about the work the CEEAC was undertaking in these areas. This made it difficult for Cabinet members to reach a determination regarding how effectively the CEEAC was discharging its role and fully understand their challenges and successes.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*The Chair of CEEAC and Cabinet Lead for this area should report to Cabinet after each CEEAC meeting under the agenda item at Cabinet "recommendations from other committees." This was not consistently done last year.*

*Whilst the work of the CEEAC should cross-cut all services, consideration should be given to the creation of a distinct portfolio area covering climate and nature, briefings could then take place monthly with the Cabinet Member and chair of CEEAC to ensure information is shared quickly and fully.*

32. Building cross-party consensus and collaboration was regarded as the main achievements of the committee.

33. Securing resources for the new climate change lead officers was highlighted by respondents as the main thing that had worked well.

34. Contributors suggested that the following could be improved:

- Making practical recommendations to Cabinet;
- Receiving advice from external experts;
- Delivering the objectives of the Corporate Plan;
- Quality of discussion and the structure of meetings.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

*The forward plan will provide space for external speakers to be invited to future meetings. It is also planned that there will be an all Councillor Briefing with external consultants who have completed the District Council Scenario modelling in the late Spring.*

*The Town and Parish Council Forum represents a good opportunity for the CEEAC to receive advice and information from external speakers as well as showcase the development of the Climate Action Plan.*

*The CEEAC fulfilling a role to monitor the performance of the Corporate Plan will give the Committee a central role in helping the Council to deliver the objectives in the Corporate Plan.*

*As the CEEAC has such a broad remit, managing debate and structure of the meetings can be challenging. It is recommended that advice is sought from Democratic Services on how they can help to support and structure the meetings. more frequent liaison is needed between the meeting Clerk, Chair, Vice Chair, Cabinet Lead and reporting officers to ensure effective management of the meeting.*



## Climate and ecological impact implications

35. The implementation of the Council's climate and ecological emergency declarations are explicitly designed to achieve positive ecological, climate and sustainability impacts. It is understood that embedding consideration of ecological impacts across all Council decision making and project development is an important step towards making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in South Oxfordshire.
36. The CEEAC play an essential role in providing advice and guidance to Cabinet on the delivery of all climate and nature projects, therefore a review of its effectiveness was needed to ensure they are operating as effectively as possible given the scale of ambition in this area and our challenging targets.

## Financial Implications

37. 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).
38. 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

39. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Risks

## Conclusion

40. Members are invited to note the key findings in report
41. Members are invited to take forward a recommendation to Cabinet to implement the recommendations set out in this report.

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

Author: Andy Egan, Climate Action Lead

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Cabinet member responsible: Andrea Powell

E-mail: andrea.powell@southoxon.gov.uk

To: Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

DATE: 12 April 2021

## 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.

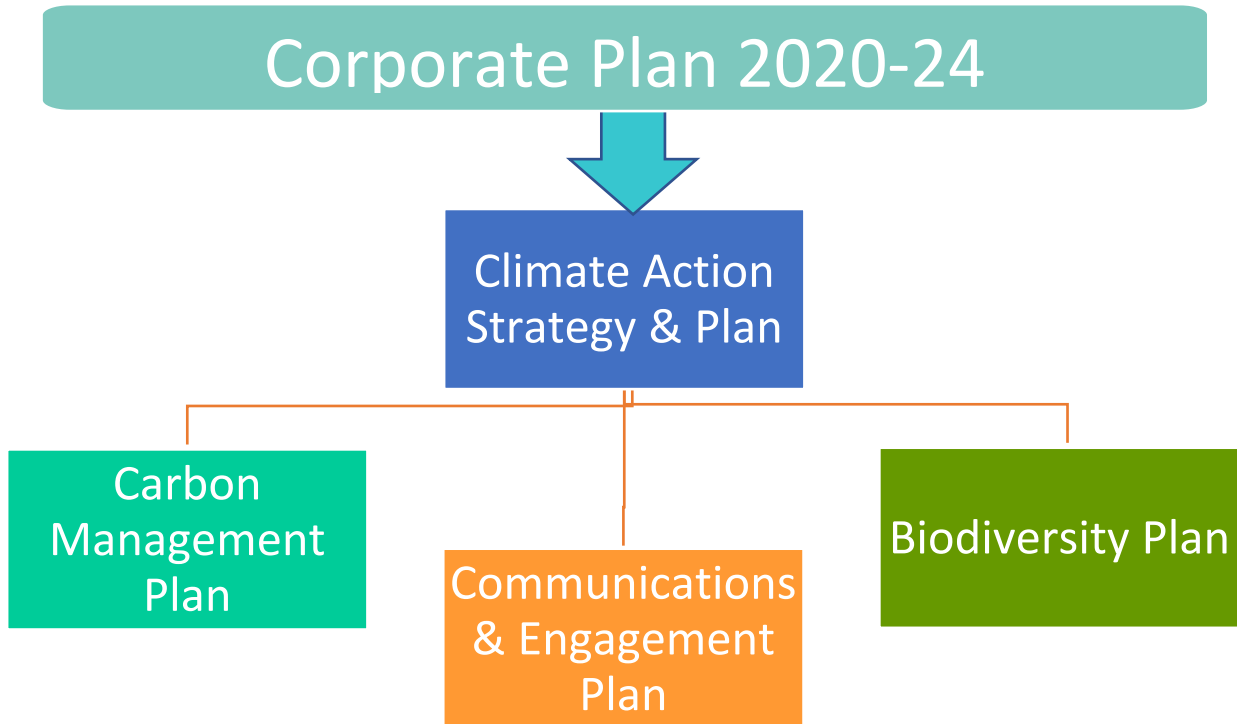
## **Background**

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.

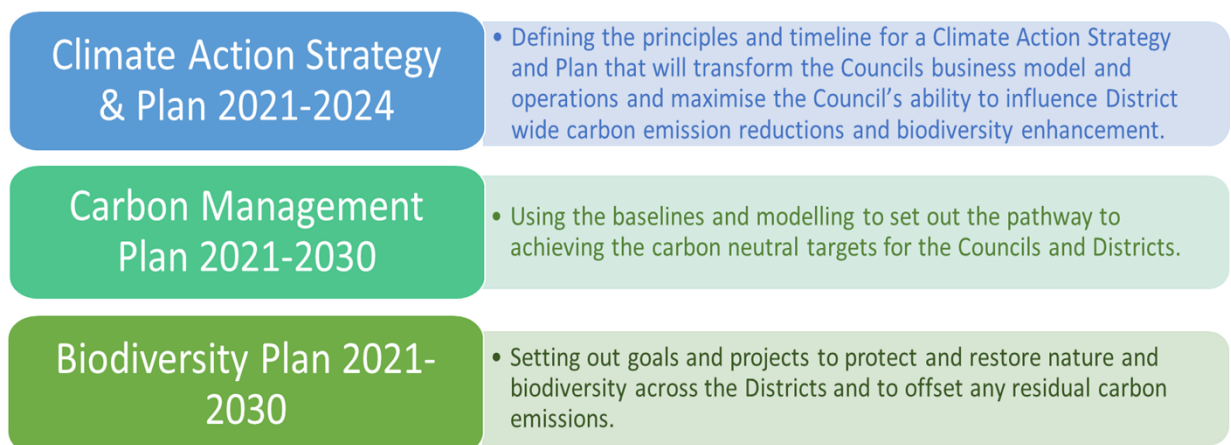
## **Main subject of report**

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:

	<b>TASK</b>	<b>OUTPUTS</b>	<b>DELIVERY DATE BY</b>
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

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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Cabinet member responsible: Andrea Powell

E-mail: [andrea.powell@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.powell@southoxon.gov.uk)

To: Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

DATE: 12 April 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

## Climate Action and Biodiversity 2021/22 Work Programme

### Recommendation(s)

(a) Committee to note the progress and process to date, including the activity commissioned within the 2020/21 budget, in respect of providing a strategic response to the Council's climate emergency declaration and adopted carbon neutral targets for the Council and the District.

(b) Committee to review the proposed 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programmes, in respect of providing a strategic response to the Corporate Plan 2020-24, which will provide a base for the South Oxfordshire District Council Climate Action Plan and proposed Biodiversity Action Plan.

(c) Committee to approve the submission of the proposed 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programmes to Cabinet.

(d) Committee to recommend to Cabinet that the proposed quarterly Corporate Plan 2020-24 performance reports are brought forward to the CEEAC, in order for them to check, challenge and provide advice on project progress to Cabinet, against the projects included in this work programme for 2021/22.

### Purpose of Report

1. This report outlines a proposed programme in 2021/22 that the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) could recommend to

Cabinet as a strategic response to the Corporate Plan together with the climate and ecological emergencies declarations and adopted carbon neutral targets for the Council and the District.

2. The items put forward for inclusion in the 2021/22 work programme have been defined by the Corporate Plan projects that have been agreed by Council members for delivery in 21/22. They are complemented by projects from the 2020/21 CEAC Year One Work Programme that have been carried forward (principally due to the delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic). This report also outlines the climate and biodiversity items considered business as usual for council officers. It further indicates new proposed areas of work so reflects the totality of action that the Council is taking in respect of the climate and ecological emergencies
3. Officers have categorised the work programme into four key headings: Foundational projects, Council projects, District projects and County-wide partnerships and projects.
4. With the new priority accorded to protecting and restoring the natural world in the Corporate Plan there are distinct work programmes presented for Biodiversity and the Climate Emergency respectively.
5. The report indicates those projects which we are currently able to take forward within allocated budgets (in colour) and those which require further scoping and funding (greyed out).

## Strategic Objectives

6. This work is supported by both the Council's carbon neutral targets and the new South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2020-24 which 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."*
7. The Corporate Plan also establishes a new priority to Protect and Restore the Natural World with a pledge to: *"We will respect and protect our natural environment, especially our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) 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."* The importance of the Council's biodiversity work has been reinforced by the recent Full Council declaration of an ecological emergency on 11 February 2021.

## Background

8. A climate emergency was declared by the South Oxfordshire District Council administration at Full Council in April 2019. The motion outlined the intention for the Council to consider adopting an early carbon neutral target.
9. To support a response to the climate emergency, the Council established the Committee to develop and recommend mitigating actions and advise Cabinet on matters relating to climate change.
10. The Year One Work Programme for 2020/21 was recommended by the Committee and approved by Cabinet in January 2020. Despite the restrictions occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic considerable progress has been made in delivering the programme.
11. Much of the work completed has been foundational and will provide the basis on which the Council can determine the priority actions to take in order to progress towards the achievement of the carbon neutral targets. Baselines have been completed for both the Council and the district and the next step of modelling different scenarios for how the targets may be achieved is due to be completed and presented to all Councillors and SMT in May 2021. These scenarios will be key to the development of a Climate Action Strategy and Plan and specifically a Carbon Management Plan that will define the pathway to becoming carbon neutral.

## Annual Summary 2020/21

12. While the Covid-19 pandemic created many challenges in 2020/21 that impacted the delivery of the Year One Work Programme, there were also some positive outcomes, including a reduction in the Council's carbon emissions. The table below shows the key operational areas in which emissions reductions were made in the first three quarters of 2020/21

South Oxfordshire CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (tonnes) Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 2020/21				
	2019/20	2020/21	Change on 2019/20	% change on 2019/20
Leisure Centres	923	363	-560	-60.67%
Council offices	67	50	-17	-25.37%
Cornerstone	78	49	-29	-37.18%
Staff mileage	24	11	-13	-54.17%

13. The Leisure Centre reductions can be attributed exclusive to closures due to Covid-19 related closures and restricted access. Sustained reductions will only be achieved through the implementation of decarbonisation projects.
14. For office and staff related emissions there is an opportunity to consolidate some of the emissions reductions into longer term adjustments to working arrangements. Though it should be noted that carbon emission savings from the council buildings will have transferred to some extent to individual officer's homes.
15. The key activities that have been completed or progressed in 2020/21 from the Year One Work Programme are:

- Baseline carbon emissions data reports for district compiled by Aether and presented to Councillors.
- Distinct climate and nature themes embedded in the new Corporate Plan 2020-24 with climate action and sustainability integrated throughout the plan. Significant input from the CEAC into the development of the plan.
- Recruitment of two Climate Action leads (from Nov 2020 and Jan 2021)
- Seven CEAC meetings held
- Task & Finish groups covering: Year One Work Programme prioritisation, scoping and development, staff conference design, joint design guide and biodiversity
- Membership of Oxfordshire Greentech
- Climate and ecological implications added to formal democratic report templates. Each decision and report will now be presented with detail on the climate and ecological implications so that members are fully cognisant of the impact of any formal decisions.
- Commissioning Anthesis to conduct a district climate action scenario modelling report and Town and Parish Council mapping.
- Completion of the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS) 2020-25.
- Council motion declaring an ecological emergency and change of committee name to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC)
- CEEAC review held to review the Committee's effectiveness to date and to identify recommendations for improving effectiveness and alignment to the corporate plan going forward.

In addition to the Year One Work Programme, over the past year the Councillor Community grant has supported several projects by our communities that address climate action. This included tree planting and biodiversity schemes, improving the local environment, encouraging residents to enjoy the outdoors, and enhancing wildlife friendly areas in public spaces as well as private gardens. One project also assisted with the installation of new LED lighting in a community building which will result in immediate energy saving for the organisation.

### **Prioritisation for 2021/22**

16. The priority items have been drawn from the new Corporate Plan. Some of these projects were included in the budget approved by Council in February (in colour) and some are subject to future discretionary growth (greyed out). Should the opportunity arise during the year to consider funding further corporate plan activities, these could be brought forward for consideration as supplementary estimates.

17. This has been complemented by a review of the Year One Work programme and identification of projects which need to be carried forward, including some which have been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some projects have been deprioritised due to the changing work patterns with staff predominantly working from home.
18. This process has involved review and scoping meetings with the CEEAC Chair, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Transformation, the Cabinet Lead for Climate Action and officers from Insight & Policy.
19. The focus for 2021/22 is to move from policy development into the delivery phase and make progress towards achieving the carbon neutral targets for the Council's own operations. This will be reinforced with the development of a three-year Climate Action Plan for 2021-2024.

### Corporate Plan Climate Action Items

20. The greyed-out items in the table below have not been included in the Council budget for 2021/22 as approved by Full Council in February 2021. The Lead column identifies the SMT member responsible for ensuring delivery together with the Insight & Policy team member advising on delivery.

NEW CORPORATE PLAN CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS					
Project		Description	Cabinet Lead	Lead	Notes
<b>Theme 3: Action to Tackle the Climate Emergency</b>					
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS					
ACE1	Becoming carbon neutral	Produce a Carbon Management Plan to set out the pathways to achieving our own zero carbon target by 2025 and working with others to achieve the district target of zero carbon by 2030	Cllr. Sue Cooper	Suzanne Malcolm; Climate Action Team	
ACE2	Annual programme	Develop an annually approved climate emergency programme and adequately finance it	Cllr. Sue Cooper	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	
COUNCIL PROJECTS					
ACE3	Net zero homes	Deliver Council-owned net-zero homes and use grants, planning policy and advocacy to ensure the same standards throughout the district	Cllr. Robin Bennett	Suzanne Malcolm;	
ACE4	Behaviour change	Promote and encourage behavioural change with informational campaigns and leading by example	Cllr. Andrea Powell	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	
ACE6	Planning and land use	Mitigate climate change through planning and land use, enhancing biodiversity on our own land and strengthening the planning system to enforce environmental standards	Cllr David Rouane	Adrian Duffield;	
DISTRICT PROJECTS					

ACE4	Behaviour change	Promote and encourage behavioural change with informational campaigns and leading by example	Cllr. Andrea Powell	James Carpenter ; Elizabeth Kingdom	
ACE5	Single use plastics, air quality and sustainable transport	Take positive action on single-use plastics, air quality improvement measures and sustainable transport	Cllr. David Rouane	Liz Hayden; Elizabeth Kingdom	
ACE7	Circular economy	Promote the circular economy (reduce, re-use and recycle), including in our waste management contracts	Cllr. David Rouane	Liz Hayden; Heather Saunders	
ACE8	Business support	Support and encourage local businesses to respond to climate change and nature recovery	Cllr. Robin Bennett	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	Greentech annual membership fee
ACE9	Waste reduction	Promote waste minimisation initiatives such as Repair Cafés	Cllr David Rouane	Liz Hayden; Elizabeth Kingdom	Promote existing initiatives
ACE10	Active Travel	Work with Oxfordshire County Council to build on our commitment to active travel including walking, public transport and cycling infrastructure	Cllr. Pieter Paul Barker	Suzanne Malcolm	

**Theme 4: Improved economic and community wellbeing**

**DISTRICT PROJECTS**

ECW3	Active travel and broadband	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 homeworking	Cllr. Anne-Marie Simpson	Suzanne Malcolm	
ECW5	Green spaces	Use our planning powers to preserve our valuable green spaces, particularly in urban areas	Cllr. Anne-Marie Simpson	Adrian Duffield; Andy Egan	

**Theme 5: Homes and Infrastructure that meet local needs**

**COUNCIL PROJECTS**

HILN7	Government funding	Ensuring that our teams are ready to access or signpost to any Government schemes or funding that is made available	Cllr. Robin Bennett	James Carpenter ; Michelle Wells	
HILN9	Spatial planning	Spatial planning embeds public health, wellbeing and sustainability	Cllr. Pieter-Paul Barker	Adrian Duffield;	

**DISTRICT PROJECTS**

HILN1	Garden communities	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	Cllr. David Rouane	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	Provide support for Didcot, Berinsfield,
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		walking and cycling network, community facilities and accessible green spaces for Didcot residents			Garden Communities contribution towards net zero carbon developments
HILN4	Retrofit	Support and encouragement for the retrofit of our existing housing stock for low-carbon performance and to eliminate fuel poverty	Cllr. Sue Cooper	Liz Hayden; Elizabeth Kingdom	Feasibility and scoping study on options for setting up a district retro fit scheme.  Support to South Oxfordshire Scrutiny Committee, Task & Finish group on this area
HILN8	New homes	New homes are future-proofed, meeting the highest environmental standards and enhancing nature through sensitive, high quality design	Cllr. Anne-Marie Simpson	Adrian Duffield;	
HILN11	Sustainable transport	Sustainable transport solutions prioritise walking, cycling and public transport to reduce car dependency and air pollution	Cllr. Pieter Paul Barker	Suzanne Malcolm	

**Theme 6: Investment and innovation that rebuilds our financial viability**

**COUNCIL PROJECTS**

IRFV2	Invest to Save	“Invest to save” for the District, including the delivery of sustainable new Council offices – on time and within budget – to realise future operational efficiencies	Cllr. Leigh Rawlins	Adrianna Partridge; Climate Action Team	
IRFV4	External Funding	Maximise external funding opportunities to support our services and to enrich our leisure, sporting and community activities	Cllr. Maggie Phillipova-Rivers	Suzanne Malcolm; Michelle Wells	
IRFV5	Ethical Investment	Invest responsibly and ethically with the Climate Emergency at the heart of what we do	Cllr. Leigh Rawlins	Simon Hewings;	

**New Priority Climate Action Items**

21. In addition to the Corporate Plan projects a number of other projects have been identified as priorities to take forward over the coming year. These are being delivered within current staffing resources.

**NEW PRIORITY CLIMATE ACTION ITEMS**

Project		Action	Lead	Notes
<b>FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS</b>				
	Climate Action Plan 2021-24	Develop a three-year Climate Action Plan including the establishment of internal governance and engagement structures. This will be supported by a Communications and Engagement Plan.	Suzanne Malcolm; James Carpenter Andy Egan; Elizabeth Kingdom	See separate paper
	Officer training	Implement training for officers on South Oxfordshire' target and work to address the climate emergency	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	eLearning module (buy from another Council) <i>Investigate options</i>
<b>COUNCIL PROJECTS</b>				
	Low Carbon Council Estate	Prepare site decarbonisation plans for council buildings including heating and renewable energy options appraisals. Compile data in preparation for external funding applications.	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	
<b>COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS</b>				
	Oxfordshire Growth Board	Advise on Zero Carbon Economy Study and Environmental Sub- Group development	Suzanne Malcolm; Michelle Wells; Andy Egan	
	Ox-Cam Arc	Advise on climate action and environmental principles and seek to ensure the Arc makes a positive contribution to achieving the Council's carbon neutral and nature recovery objectives	Suzanne Malcolm; Michelle Wells; Andy Egan	
	Rivers Thames Champion	Work to support the Thames Valley Rivers Network Group, with the Thames Champion and scope and explore projects and funding that link to Climate Action and Biodiversity goals	Michelle Wells; Elizabeth Kingdom	
	COP26	Participate in the Oxfordshire COP26 Alliance	Michelle Wells; Elizabeth Kingdom	

## Climate Action Items Already Commissioned

22. The following projects are either continuing or being carried forward from the previous Year One Work Programme and were budgeted for 2020/21.

<b>CARRY FORWARD AND ONGOING CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS</b>				
Project		Action	Lead	Notes
<b>FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS</b>				
	Council emissions	Create a 'glidepath' tool that tracks the contribution of delivered and planned	Suzanne Malcolm	

	baseline	projects and external factors towards achieving a carbon neutral council	Heather Saunders	
	Scenario Modelling	Develop a model to demonstrate the detailed scope and size of actions needed by all stakeholders to achieve a pathway towards a carbon neutral district	Michelle Wells; Andy Egan; Heather Saunders	
	Town Energy Mapping	Provide baseline energy and carbon emissions data and maps for our market towns	Michelle Wells; Elizabeth Kingdom; Heather Saunders	
	Climate Action Briefing	Session for Councillors and staff on the Council's climate action plan	Andy Egan; Elizabeth Kingdom	
	Intranet	Internal staff intranet (Jarvis) page on the climate emergency	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	Currently in development due to go live April 2021.
<b>COUNCIL PROJECTS</b>				
	Solar energy	Identify opportunities to invest in solar energy off site and offset the council's own emissions. Research the investment and partnership options available	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	
	Planning Design Guide	Support the development of policies in the Joint South and Vale Design Guide that will contribute towards a carbon neutral district	Adrian Duffield; Heather Saunders	
	Green Travel Plan	Implement a green travel plan for officers and members	Suzanne Malcolm; Elizabeth Kingdom	
	EV fleet	Support teams in preparing a business case for leasing or purchasing electric vehicles for the council's fleet	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	
<b>DISTRICT PROJECTS</b>				
	Town Councils Workshops	Work with town councils across the districts and facilitate a workshop to understand theirs and their parishes' local needs in respect of the climate emergency.	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	Town and Parish Council Forum due in Spring 2021
	Grants Programme	Refocus of the South grants programme to support community led initiatives which address climate change	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	
	EV Hire Scheme	Initial feasibility study into an electric vehicle hire facility for residents/staff	Adrianna Partridge; Elizabeth Kingdom	

COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
	Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy	Work with partners to increase EV charging infrastructure across Oxfordshire.	Liz Hayden; Andy Egan	
	Park and Charge	Work with partners to provide electric charging points in Council car parks.	Liz Hayden; Andy Egan	External funding secured

## Corporate Plan Biodiversity Items

23. The greyed-out items were not included in the Council budget for 2021/22.

CORPORATE PLAN BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS				
Project	Description		Lead	Notes
<b>Theme 1: Protect and Restore the Natural World</b>				
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS				
PRN1	Ecosystem Mapping	With partners, promote in-depth mapping and surveying of ecosystems across the district, planning for restoration of the natural world and working closely with landowners and specialist agencies	Adrian Duffield; Dominic Lamb	Base budget 5,000 from Planning budget
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
PRN2	Natural assets	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	TBC	
PRN3	Nature based solutions	Encourage the use of natural processes to combat risks arising from climate change, such as meadows and trees to reduce flooding	TBC	
PRN4	Regenerative agriculture	Recognise and support the vital role of farming in economic and ecosystem resilience, local food provision and the recovery of soils and natural processes	TBC Andy Egan	Investigate regenerative farming and upscaling local food production
COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
PRN5	Local Nature Partnership	Call for the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Oxfordshire to promote an ambitious nature recovery programme, including tree and meadow planting, rewilding and providing habitats for wildlife including wildlife corridors	Adrian Duffield; Dominic Lamb	Requires ongoing revenue funding
PRN6	Access to green spaces	Work in partnership with the Earth Trust, Chilterns Conservation Board, North Wessex Downs AONB, the Environment Agency and others to improve access to green spaces in and around our towns, reinforcing access to	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan; Elizabeth	

	nature as a priority for community wellbeing	Kingdom	
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## New Priority Biodiversity Items

24. In addition to the Corporate Plan projects a number of other projects have been identified as priorities to take forward over the coming year. Some of these are being delivered within current staffing resources. Those that are greyed-out require additional resources and will be subject to future discretionary growth.

NEW PRIORITY BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS				
Project		Description	Lead	Notes
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS				
PRN9	Biodiversity Steering Group	Set up a South and Vale Biodiversity Steering Group to advise and help shape the delivery of the Councils' Corporate Plan biodiversity, nature protection and nature recovery objectives.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	See separate paper
PRN10	Biodiversity Plan	Develop a 10-year biodiversity plan for how the Council will lead on nature protection and recovery.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	
PRN11	Tree Policy	Develop a tree policy and strategy for South and Vale that covers council owned land, private land and community land.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
PRN12	Tree Planting Programme	Establish a district wide tree planting programme	TBC; Andy Egan	Requires new capacity and resources
		Develop proposal for at least one Tiny Forest in partnership with Earthwatch	TBC; Andy Egan	Potential to secure CiL funding
PRN13	Habitat Banking	Feasibility study into setting up a Habitat Bank to deliver biodiversity offsetting requirements	TBC; Andy Egan	Scoping study

## 25. BIODIVERSITY ITEMS ALREADY COMMISSIONED (existing 2020/21 budget):

CARRY FORWARD AND ONGOING BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS				
Project		Description	Lead	Notes
COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
PRN7	Nature Recovery Strategy	Contribution to a county wide strategy to be produced by the Local Nature Partnership (LNP)	Adrian Duffield  Dominic Lamb	From Planning budget. Part of the Environment Bill and expected to become a statutory duty for local authorities

PRN8	Net Biodiversity Gain	Contribution to a county wide net biodiversity gain strategy to be produced by the LNP	Adrian Duffield  Dominic Lamb	From Planning budget. Part of the Environment Bill and expected to become a statutory duty for local authorities
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## Items Considered Business As Usual

26. Climate Action Plan: For the Council to meet the Climate Emergency declaration and Corporate Plan targets, we need a robust strategy and policy framework, that will include a Climate Action Strategy and Plan. This plan will be informed by the Corporate Plan, carbon neutral targets, learning from the year one work programme and critical data from the Council and district baseline data and forthcoming carbon neutral scenario modelling due for completion in May 2021.
27. CEEAC support and co-ordination: In order to facilitate the effective running of the CEEAC a significant proportion of officer time will be spent liaising with the Chair and CEEAC members on agenda and forward plan management and report preparation. This will also be in close liaison with the Cabinet Lead for Climate and Environment projects in the Corporate Plan.
28. Governance: Across the Council we will formalise climate action within our internal governance so that it becomes embedded within business as usual activity. One essential element of this is to establish senior officer engagement in developing and ensuring effective delivery of the Climate Action Plan. This has recently been progressed with the establishment of a Climate Action Steering Group. Other important aspects are procurement and major contract renewal and includes early preparation for the specification of the new leisure facilities and waste management contracts in 2024, ongoing leisure centre maintenance and refurbishment and grounds maintenance. It is important that when other policies are developed or reviewed, they are informed and guided by climate and biodiversity considerations. A policy and strategy guidance document will soon be in place as part of the council's Corporate Delivery Framework. This will provide staff with the tools they need to develop robust fully rounded policy.
29. Engagement: In order to achieve this transformation in the way we do business we need to encourage and support a change in culture so that climate action is embedded at the heart of the organisation. We will engage with staff to ensure that there is a deep understanding of both the climate and ecological emergencies. This will help to build an assured commitment of staff across the organisation. An organisation wide staff and member climate conference will be organised once the Climate Action Plan is approved. This will be followed by staff training in areas such as carbon literacy. We are also proposing to establish a Climate Action Delivery Group of key officers and a network of Green Champions drawn from across the Council staff.
30. Partnership: We will continue to work in partnership to progress our climate action goals. We will collaborate to develop external funding bids in order to deliver agreed targets and commitments. Where appropriate we will adopt a joint South

and Vale approach and work with other districts and Oxfordshire County Council, as well as relevant charitable and community organisations. We will actively monitor or participate in projects by trusted partners as resources allow. There may be specific projects that directly contribute to the target that is set which could be funded by South Oxfordshire and delivered by outside partners who have an established track record and expertise with the work.

31. Influencing and lobbying: We will continue to seek to positively influence central government policy in relation to the climate and ecological emergencies. We will respond to relevant consultations to make the case for effective central government legislation, policies and funding for local authority climate and nature protection and recovery action.

## **Climate and ecological implications**

32. The implementation of the Council's climate emergency work programme 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.
33. Sustaining and increasing staffing capacity and project funding to implement projects that will reduce council and district carbon emissions and protect and restore nature will be essential in ensuring that the 2021/22 work programme delivers positive impacts.
34. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Biodiversity Lead role that could provide leadership and co-ordination, given the level of commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the recent declaration of an ecological emergency.

## **Financial Implications**

35. 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).
36. 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.
37. It was noted last year that many items included within the proposed year one programme of work were feasibility studies and it was acknowledged that there would be significant resource implications and additional budget required beyond year one of the programme. This has been reinforced by the agreement of the new Corporate Plan 2020-24. A further key element of the transformation required to

embed climate action and nature recovery work across the Council, is that in addition to identifying new resources, existing resources will need to be redirected or reallocated to support commitments in the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

38. The district scenario modelling and Climate Action Plan will inform and help to scope the climate and nature projects that will be tabled for consideration in any future discretionary growth bids, that would be considered as part of a future supplementary estimate.
39. It is equally clear that we cannot as a Council fund and undertake all of the work that is required to achieve the carbon neutral targets for the district. Additional sources of funding and resourcing will be needed in addition to any new budget allocation. This could include government grants, investment by businesses, households, town and parish councils and contributions by environmental charities and community action groups. What we do need to ensure as a Council is that we have the capacity to position ourselves to secure climate action funding made available by central government and other bodies.
40. The Council has allocated funding to employ two Climate Action Lead officers for 12 months until September and December 2021 respectively. This cost has been shared on a 50:50 basis with Vale of White Horse District Council. However, given the breadth and depth of the work programme for 2021-22 and central emphasis of this area in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 consideration should be given to the longer-term management and delivery of projects in this area.

## **Legal Implications**

41. 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.
42. 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**

43. Climate action is not currently a statutory function for district councils; however local authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) Many of the projects/activities detailed within this report require a funding stream and have resource implications, including implications arising from redirecting current resource from areas across the Council to this agenda if this is the approach the Cabinet decide to take.
44. Moreover, due to the current financial position, it may not be possible to deliver on the full climate and ecological emergency aspirations declared by the Council.
45. South Oxfordshire District Council is in partnership with the Vale of White Horse District Council and any items implemented in relation to council operations could lead to complexities, due to shared resources and offices at 135 Milton Park.



## **Conclusion**

41. This report describes the process by which projects were identified for the coming year. It further details which projects have been prioritised from the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and included in the budget approved by Council in February 2021. The report further sets out the Corporate Plan projects that may be brought forward in as part of future discretionary growth.
42. The report also sets out the ongoing projects the Council is already involved in to address the climate and ecological emergencies, and detailed items considered business as usual for council officers as well as items which have already been commissioned within the existing 2020/21 budget to support meeting the climate emergency targets

## **Background Papers**

None

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

DATE: 17 March 2021

## AGENDA ITEM

## Ecological Emergency Declaration

### Recommendation(s)

- (a) For Committee to note the progress of and plans for implementing the resolutions set out in the Ecological Emergency declaration which was passed at the Full Council meeting held on 11 February 2021.
- (b) For Committee to recommend to Cabinet the establishment of a joint South and Vale member and officer Biodiversity Steering Group, as part of the implementation of the motion declaring an Ecological Emergency in South Oxfordshire and to assist the Council in scoping projects in the Corporate Plan 2020-24 under Theme – Protect and Restore the Natural World which are currently subject to future discretionary growth.

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide a report to the Committee on the proposed implementation of the resolutions included in the Ecological Emergency declaration passed at the Council meeting held on 11 February 2021.
2. To present the terms of reference for the proposed Biodiversity Steering Group.

### Strategic Objectives

3. This report sets out how we are taking forward the implementation of the Ecological Emergency declaration and how we propose to progress the Corporate Plan objectives for protecting and restoring the natural world.

**Background**

4. The full text of the Ecological Emergency declaration is detailed in Appendix A
5. Officers have reviewed each of the resolutions included in the declaration and have indicated the current position towards progressing implementation as follows:

RESOLUTION	ACTION TAKEN / PROPOSED	LEAD OFFICER
Council declaration of an ecological emergency	Press release and social media announcements	Jo Duckles
Rename CEAC the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, to help Cabinet and council officers address these twin emergencies	Done	Steven Corrigan
Add ecological impact implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and council reports.	The Council’s report writing guidance has been updated to include climate and ecological implications.  The report templates have been updated to include: “Climate, sustainability and ecological impact implications.”	Michelle Wells
Ensure that addressing the climate and ecological emergencies and nature recovery are considered as strategic priorities for planning policies and design guides for new development, including master-planning of sites, by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain and ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process, whilst also working on the principle of increasing equality of access for people to natural, green spaces		Suzanne Malcolm
Establish a Biodiversity Steering Group involving both key officers and members to oversee and develop the Councils	Proposal for a joint South and Vale biodiversity steering group to be considered by CEEAC	Andy Egan, Dominic Lamb

approach to nature protection and recovery	on 12 April and Vale CEAC on 19 April	
Set measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking also to increase community engagement	Subject to future discretionary growth  To be embedded in future Biodiversity Plan 2021-30	Suzanne Malcolm  Andy Egan
Work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire as soon as possible, in keeping with the urgency of this declaration	Two County wide workshops completed, and a draft proposal developed.  Funding for LNP subject to future discretionary growth	Suzanne Malcolm  Dominic Lamb
Work with our partners to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire, again in keeping with the urgency of this declaration	Development of a Nature Recovery Strategy and network is likely to be one of the first priorities for a Local Nature Partnership.  Draft Nature Recovery Network map has been developed for OP2050  Funding for strategy/network subject to future discretionary growth	Suzanne Malcolm  Dominic Lamb
Look for opportunities to work in partnership with local charities and environmental organisations to deliver nature recovery in South Oxfordshire	Opportunities will be reviewed subject to resources available	All
Develop a district wide Tree Planting Policy and Strategy, including having Member Tree Champions, to support nature protection and recovery and carbon sequestration	Tree Policy development in progress  Cabinet appointed two Tree Champions: Cllr. Ian Snowden and Cllr. Peter Dragonetti	Andy Egan

<p>Build on the work of the Thames Champion to improve the ecology of the Thames and its banks and flood plains, a hugely important habitat in our District</p>	<p>The Council currently host the Thames Valley Rivers Network, opportunities and projects will be discussed in this forum</p>	<p>Michelle Wells  Elizabeth Kingdom</p>
<p>Ensure the Strategic Property Review (SPR) considers opportunities for biodiversity enhancements and tree planting on Council landholdings</p>	<p>In progress  Ongoing liaison between Insight and Policy/Property and Planning to ensure opportunities are explored and ongoing review of potential sites.  Suggest Project Board for SPR be created to obtain wider corporate input into findings and recommendations</p>	<p>Suzanne Malcolm  Catrin Mathias</p>
<p>Investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities</p>	<p>Subject to future discretionary growth.  Initial meetings with BBOWT and TOE completed.  To be embedded in future Biodiversity Plan 2021-30</p>	<p>Dominic Lamb</p>
<p>Embed climate action and ecological initiatives within all council work areas, including COVID-19 recovery projects and programmes</p>		<p>Suzanne Malcolm  Michelle Wells</p>
<p>Write to all South Oxfordshire's MPs urging them to support the Climate and Ecological Bill, a private member's bill, in keeping with the declarations of this Council.</p>	<p>Done</p>	<p>Michelle Wells</p>

6. The proposal to establish a Biodiversity Steering Group is detailed in Appendix B.

## Climate and ecological impact implications

7. The implementation of the Council's ecological emergency declaration is explicitly designed to achieve positive ecological, climate and sustainability impacts. It is understood that embedding consideration of ecological impacts across all Council decision making and project development is an important step towards making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in South Oxfordshire.
8. The Council currently employs 2 full time ecologist's whose primary role is dealing with ecological issues within the planning system, managing the Great Crested Newt District Licence scheme and managing the councils Countryside Sites. Only very limited capacity is currently available for developing new biodiversity projects or delivering the aims of the ecological emergency declaration.
9. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Biodiversity Lead role that could provide leadership and co-ordination this area of work, given the level of commitment to it in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24.

## Financial Implications

10. 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).
11. 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.
12. A number of the projects and actions arising from the declaration may have financial implications for the Council. The Biodiversity Steering Group will identify the costs associated with the projects prioritised for implementation. Before proceeding with any options, a financial evaluation will be undertaken to assess these costs, before recommendations are made to the Cabinet.
13. As work develops and funding is required, projects and activities will be subject to individual business cases as appropriate, and financial scrutiny.

## Legal Implications

14. 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

15. There is a significant reputational risk for the Council in not taking action and not allocating or aligning resources to fulfil its Corporate Plan objectives for nature protection and recovery.
16. There is an overriding risk that the state of nature and biodiversity will continue to deteriorate in South Oxfordshire unless the Council takes decisive action to ensure effective protection and recovery.

## Other Implications

17. An assessment of the carbon sequestration benefits of the delivery of the nature recovery projects should be carried out to contribute to measuring progress towards the target of becoming a carbon neutral district by 2030.
18. Working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders – landowners, businesses, communities, the County Council, Town and Parish Councils, statutory agencies - in the district will be critical in the delivery of effective nature protection and recovery initiatives.

## Conclusion

19. Members are invited to note the active response made in taking forward the Ecological Emergency motion resolutions.
20. Members are invited to take forward a recommendation to Cabinet to establish a Biodiversity Steering Group.

## Background Papers

## Appendix A

### Meeting of Council, Thursday, 11 February 2021 6.00 pm (Item 8.)

#### **Motion proposed by Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, seconded by Councillor David Rouane**

Council has adopted a new Corporate Plan that has as one of its main priorities: 'Protect and Restore the Natural World'. In the consultation exercise on this Plan, this theme was ranked the most important by a high number of respondents. This Council has already, rightly, declared a climate emergency (April 2019).

Council acknowledges that:

- Our societies and economies are intimately linked with and depend on biodiversity and nature. The natural world is essential for the provision of nutritious food (with soil and pollinators having a vital role), clean water, clean air, medicines, and

protection from extreme weather, as well as being our source of energy and raw materials

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relationship between people and nature. When we destroy and degrade habitats, we increase the risk of disease spill-over from wildlife to people
- The State of Nature 2019 report highlighted the critical decline in biodiversity in the UK. Changes in farming practices have had the biggest effect in recent decades and the impact of climate change is now increasing. 15% of UK species are classified as threatened with extinction and 2% are already extinct
- The [State of the World's Plants and Fungi 2020 report](#) from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew estimated that 39.4% of plants are now threatened with extinction. This is a jump from one in five plants thought to be at risk in Kew's 2016 report
- The Environment Bill will require the introduction of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Nature Recovery Networks
- Actions to restore nature and biodiversity, as well as being vital for their own sake, often have an important co-benefit of storing carbon, so help address climate change
- People's access to 'green spaces' to understand and appreciate biodiversity and a rich, natural world, private or public, is unequal

Council resolves to:

1. Declare an ecological emergency
2. Rename CEAC the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, to help Cabinet and council officers address these twin emergencies
3. Add ecological impact implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and council reports.
4. Ensure that addressing the climate and ecological emergencies and nature recovery are considered as strategic priorities for planning policies and design guides for new development, including master-planning of sites, by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain and ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process, whilst also working on the principle of increasing equality of access for people to natural, green spaces
5. Establish a Biodiversity Steering Group involving both key officers and members to oversee and develop the Councils approach to nature protection and recovery
6. Set measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking also to increase community engagement
7. Work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire as soon as possible, in keeping with the urgency of this declaration
8. Work with our partners to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire, again in keeping with the urgency of this declaration
9. Look for opportunities to work in partnership with local charities and environmental organisations to deliver nature recovery in South Oxfordshire



10. Develop a district wide Tree Planting Policy and Strategy, including having Member Tree Champions, to support nature protection and recovery and carbon sequestration
11. Build on the work of the Thames Champion to improve the ecology of the Thames and its banks and flood plains, a hugely important habitat in our District
12. Ensure the Strategic Property Review considers opportunities for biodiversity enhancements and tree planting on Council landholdings
13. Investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities
14. Embed climate action and ecological initiatives within all council work areas, including COVID-19 recovery projects and programmes
15. Write to all South Oxfordshire's MPs urging them to support the Climate and Ecological Bill, a private member's bill, in keeping with the declarations of this Council.

## Appendix B

### Biodiversity Steering Group

#### Purpose of paper

1. To present the proposal to establish a joint South and Vale and joint member and officer Biodiversity Steering Group.
2. To present the proposed terms of reference for the Biodiversity Steering Group

#### Background

3. Both councils have prioritised nature protection and nature recovery and climate emergency related environmental sustainability in their respective Corporate Plans 2020-24. Indeed, both plans are based on a vision of all council activity being shaped by the need to operate within ecological boundaries.
4. Vale has a cabinet member with a portfolio for climate and environment. On 11 February, South unanimously agreed a motion to declare an ecological emergency (see Appendix 1). One of the resolutions commits the Council to: *Establish a Biodiversity Steering Group involving both key officers and members to oversee and develop the Councils approach to nature protection and recovery.*
5. The framework for the development of Climate Action Plans for the councils includes the development of long-term Biodiversity Plans (2021-2030). Increasing carbon storage and sequestration through biodiversity enhancement will be an essential element of achieving the councils' carbon neutral targets.
6. The Insight and Policy team are currently leading the development of a new Tree Policy and Tree Strategy for the Councils. South has recently appointed two tree Champions.
7. There are advanced plans to establish an Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and the Oxfordshire Growth Board is setting up an Environmental Advisory Group.

The planned Ox-Cam Arc includes a set of environmental principles that are seeking to achieve a “*doubling of the area of land managed primarily for nature*” and “*delivering a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain from all forms of development*”. South Cambridgeshire District Council has recently published a Doubling Nature Strategy.

8. It is expected that the statutory duties of local authorities in relation to biodiversity and the natural environment will be strengthened in the forthcoming Environment Bill. (The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 currently includes a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity). This includes duties to establish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to deliver 10% Net Biodiversity Gain from new developments.
9. The councils currently lack dedicated resources to ensure effective delivery of corporate biodiversity objectives and were not in a position to allocate new resources in the latest budget round (21/22). The lack of capacity means that we are limited to an ad hoc and reactive approach. There is understandable shared frustration - from residents, community groups and Members - that the Councils have not yet been able to make significant progress in this area. Significant officer time is currently absorbed in managing this. Dominic Lamb and Andy Egan in consultation with Michelle Wells and Suzanne Malcolm have developed a proposal for a Biodiversity Steering Group as a positive way forward to provide a focus for this activity and help to shape and inform future plans and projects.

### **Main subject of report**

10. Given that much current strategic development of biodiversity and nature recovery work is taking place on a county wide basis, it makes sense from both an ecosystem and strategic perspective to consider how we can best take forward and deliver on our biodiversity commitments on a joint South and Vale basis. With this area very much being one where cross sector partnership working is required, it will be helpful to our partners to adopt a joined-up approach.
11. A single joint member and officer steering group that can report to the South CEEAC and Vale CEAC seems to be the best approach given:
  - our limited capacity to manage and service multiple groups;
  - the advantages of developing a shared understanding between key members and officers
  - providing a streamlined process to channel the high level of interest in this area
12. The proposed purpose of the Biodiversity Steering Group is:  
To advise and help shape the delivery of the Councils’ Corporate Plan biodiversity, nature protection and nature recovery objectives.
12. The proposed remit is to:
  - Advise on the development of a biodiversity strategy and plan
  - Consider the councils’ approach to nature protection and recovery
  - Identify the resource requirements for the effective delivery of corporate plan biodiversity objectives.

- Consider the potential for carbon offsetting to contribute to the Councils' carbon neutral targets
- Act as a sounding board for specific schemes such as: nature recovery networks, habitat banking and a tree planting policy and strategy
- Make recommendations to the South CEEAC and Vale CEAC with respect to their role to "advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis"
- Consider and review the potential biodiversity impacts of major new initiatives such as Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and the Ox-Cam Arc.
- Consider the implications for the Councils of new duties and obligations as proposed in the Environment Bill.

13. It is proposed that the membership of the Biodiversity Steering Group is:

**Core members:**

- Three Councillors from each district; nominated by the Cabinet leads for climate action and the environment
- SMT representative: Suzanne Malcom
- Insight and Policy Manager: Michelle Wells
- Planning Policy Manager: Lucy Murfett
- Specialist Planning Team Leader: Dominic Lamb
- Climate Action Lead: Andy Egan

**Occasional members:** will be invited where they are relevant items on the agenda e.g. from Property, Legal, Parks/ Grounds maintenance

15. It is anticipated that meetings will be held every two months for first six months and then quarterly thereafter.