

# Minutes

## OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 22 JULY 2024  
THIS WAS AN ONLINE MEETING

### In attendance:

**Councillors:** Ali Gordon-Creed (Chair), Andrew Tinsley, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Andrea Powell, Sue Cooper, James Barlow, Leigh Rawlins, Mike Giles, Stefan Gawrysiak and Georgina Heritage (sub)

**Officers:** Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Jessie Fieth (Senior Climate Action Officer), Heather Saunders (Corporate Energy Officer), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer)

**Cabinet members:** Pieter-Paul Barker

## 75 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed committee members and officers to the meeting.

## 76 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Freddie van Mierlo and Katharine Keats Rohan. Councillor Georgina Heritage was present as a substitute member.

## 77 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 10 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

## 78 Declaration of interests

None.

## 79 Urgent business

None.

## 80 Update from the Cabinet member for Climate Action

This was a standing agenda item – the cabinet member provided an update on 10 June 2024, therefore there was no further update required.

## 81 Public participation

Vicky Beardall-Richards, Environmental Co-ordinator at Cholsey Parish Council, spoke to committee.

Vicky briefly ran through her work at Cholsey Parish Council as an example of work being carried out at parish level. This included setting up champions under different banners, such as transport and food. Work carried out was very community based. Members considered this to be an example of what more parishes could do to help meet carbon reduction targets. Vicky was thanked for her time and she offered to answer any questions from members. Chair had invited Vicky to speak to parishes in her ward, and potentially other councillors could get in touch. Due to Vicky's time constraints, she suggested a joint event if there were multiple interested parishes. A member recognised that town and parish councils can achieve more than districts alone in terms of local level behavioural change. Another member recognised the importance of communities working together and building networks, tying into the corporate plan objectives.

## 82 Review of the 2025 operational net zero target

The Corporate Energy Officer introduced the report. This report was regarding the net zero target for council operations only. There were four scenarios in the report (committed projects, potential projects, a potential solar farm and potential low carbon fleet). The officer informed the committee that whilst the report was being formed, they had secured funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 3C. This would move some leisure centre projects currently in scenario two to scenario one (committed projects).

Members asked questions and discussed the content of the report and made suggestions.

- Members discussed offsetting opportunities. An officer reminded members that offsetting was not the priority, the priority was to decarbonise operations, however officers were aware of offsetting options.
- A member considered that some areas, such as leisure centres, were achieving more success. Would it be better to segment targets to show the areas of good progress in operations (leisure centres etc). This would also highlight areas to work on. One overall target can miss those details.
- Staff and councillor mileage – was this in the residual or measured? An officer explained that this was measured via HR system claims. It was added that there would be residual emissions as we can't make staff transition to low carbon vehicles.
- A member suggested that the committee revise recommendation a) to show that it was not our direct actions since 2009-10. We should acknowledge reduction overall, but state what we were responsible for and from 2019 when the climate emergency was declared. An officer answered that we could take figures from Climate Action Plan (CAP) baseline.
- A member asked about Woodland Trust and buying land. An officer explained that we cannot claim carbon credit on existing land. It needed to be created to gain carbon credits on it.
- Can the report reflect the previous central government U-turns on climate targets. Officer explained this was more a district level impact, not operational. The report was developed by the climate team to consider our targets and the progress to date, not based on central government decisions. A member suggested that we should recognise such decisions as a barrier to achieving targets.
- A member suggesting creating a homeworker's charter

- A member asked if there were opportunities for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to volunteer. Can this be demonstration of offsetting if not formally accredited. It was suggested by an officer that this was more relevant to the district targets.
- Glidepath tool – do other councils use it in the county? It was confirmed to be used in the private sector.
- Can we talk to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) about land for a potential solar farm? Officer replied that OCC were already considering this themselves, but we could lease other land if needed.
- Car park solar panels. An officer considered that roof installation was more viable at the moment (such as leisure centres). Solar car ports could be a future consideration.
- Could the council ask for upgrades to building regulations zero carbon via Government
- Discussed Didcot Gateway, green procurement/construction and embodied emissions. An officer acknowledged that this was best practice, officers could propose to members a method for measuring this. We needed to ask the right questions to those who come to tender
- Could there be a future generations champion – how do we consider impact on future generations from actions today
- A definitions glossary was requested for phrases such as embodied carbon
- It was confirmed by officers that those councils closer to their net zero targets have done so via more offsetting
- British offsetting options had lead-in times and there was high demand. There were concerns regarding overseas offset credits.
- Waterpower was suggested but an officer explained that there were limitations on our land. We were looking for actions that were about renewable energy in the new CAP. The solar farm was a specific action in the current CAP, so it was referenced in this report. We will look at all renewable options.

Members showed support for the recommendations but added some further suggestions.

### **Recommendation(s)**

#### Recommendation (a)

That CEEAC recognises the significant progress made in reducing our operational carbon emissions by 50 per cent since 2009/10.

- Members asked that, based on the discussion had in the meeting, that this recommendation includes the progress the council had made since 2019. Members wanted to show recognition of the challenges faced by the council, considering the national context.

#### Recommendation (b)

CEEAC recommends that Cabinet adopts a revised overall operational net zero target of 2030.

- Members supported the overall target but ask Cabinet to consider having segmented and nuanced targets. Cabinet was asked to consider ways in which this data could be measured and communicated by service area.

## **83 Review of the District net zero carbon target**

The report was introduced by Senior Climate Action Officer, Jessie Fieth.

New data was released for 2022 but updated figures would be included for the September Cabinet meetings. The data does not vary enough to alter the discussion here today. We

needed a nine percent drop per year to meet the 2050 targets in the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan. The average drop we've had has been four percent since 2019. A rapid decrease in emissions occurring would still not make us able to meet the 2030 target. We had focussed on working with neighbouring authorities and partners, using our influence to have a bigger impact, because this was not a target that the council has complete control over, everyone needed to contribute.

An officer explained that there were three presented options. Members could support keeping the 2030 target whilst acknowledging that it cannot be met. The second option would be for a revised target of 2045. The third option would be to align with national targets of 2050. Officers concluded that option two would be preferable, but still would have its challenges. 2045 would be more realistic than 2030 yet ambitious enough to drive progress.

Members asked questions and made suggestions.

- A member asked should we focus on Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) County targets? Are we creating extra work for ourselves and instead could continue with collaborative efforts. Officer stated that on balance we were all working hard towards the targets whether 2045 or 2050. There was continued close collaboration with partners/neighbours and officers considered that it was not added work and targets were closely aligned to PAZCO. The work at district level supports membership to UK100.
- The officer explained that the team focus on the targets they have influence over and can make possible.
- A member considered that having a date was not useful, yet other members opposed this view.
- It was suggested that for 'recommendation b', we add detail that the district will work as hard as it can to get to carbon net zero. We were working across multiple boundaries and acknowledge that the target was not fully in our control. County activities and aspirations should be recognised with reference to PAZCO.
- A member suggested looking into Lendology.
- Planning policy - how do we account for 5 years of housing building emissions? An officer explained that some of this local plan data went into the route map, including population growth. Therefore, this was taken into account.
- A member raised a point about the vast amount of trees needed to offset new home building. An officer added that the team were aware of other offsetting activities beyond tree planting, it was not the sole option.

Members agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet:

**Recommendation(s)**

(a) That CEEAC formally recognises that the aspirational target of being a net zero carbon district by 2030 cannot be met.

(b) That CEEAC recommends that Cabinet commits to a new but still ambitious target of 2045 for reaching net zero carbon for the district.

Committee requested that additional wording is added to recommendation b, to reflect that the district will work as hard as it can to get to net zero. We acknowledge that the target was not fully in our control and partnership work was crucial as part of working within our sphere of influence. For example, countywide activities such as PAZCO.

## 84 Task and Finish group update and future agenda items

Nature and Climate Action Plan: there would be a task and finish group very soon. A review of the final version will occur towards the end of the year. CEEAC might need to meet additionally in autumn to discuss this.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: this was due to go to public consultation in October to November. There will be a task and finish group for CEEAC to provide a response to the consultation.

Chair closed the meeting and thanked the officers for their work.

The meeting closed at 7.54 pm

Chair

Date

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