

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Listening Learning Leading

Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

HELD AT 4.00 PM ON MONDAY 26 APRIL 2021

Watch the meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtwnNYMWH9k>

Present

Sam Casey-Rerhaye (Chair)

Sue Cooper, Kate Gregory, Lynn Lloyd, Caroline Newton, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, Sue Roberts, David Rouane and Celia Wilson

Officers

Harry Barrington-Mountford, Andy Egan, Elizabeth Kingdom, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders and Michelle Wells.

Also present:

Public speaker – Mr Oliver De Soissons

Ben Taylor from Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE)

92 Chair's announcements

The new committee chair, Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, opened the meeting by announcing that there would be election of a vice chair in this meeting. Previous committee chair, Councillor Roberts, was thanked for her hard work and commitment to the committee in its first year, establishing terms and the remit, which was a challenging task. Councillor Roberts will remain a CEEAC member.

The progress of the committee was reviewed after its first year, and this was going to be looked at in this meeting. This was a good time to review and refocus in light of the new corporate plan objectives and a change in chair. The CEEAC has helped set the foundation of the council's climate emergency focus. The climate and ecological implications section in officer reports was a good example.

Town and Parish Forum on 27 May will be focused on climate.
It was noted that it was Earth Day last week.

Please take a look at the new South Oxfordshire climate pages on our website.

The Local Nature Partnership was being set up in Oxfordshire and a link to the meeting on 11 May would be circulated to the CEEAC.

93 Apologies for absence

Apologies were given from Councillors Stefan Gawrysiak and Jane Murphy.

Chair encouraged members to provide a substitute member where possible to involve as many councillors as possible.

94 Appointment of a Vice-chair

It was proposed that Councillor Celia Wilson be elected as vice chair of the CEEAC. This was seconded and agreed.

It was noted that Councillor Wilson was committed to the CEEAC and would make a good vice chair. However, it was noted that there may be changes to committees after the bi elections.

95 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

96 Urgent business

Councillor Roberts did mention the Zero Carbon Homes Initiative and said she would send information to the committee that may be of interest.

97 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 28 October 2020 and the minutes of 30 November 2020 were reviewed.

Celia Wilson wanted her apologies added to 28 October meeting, as it was not noted in the minutes.

Item 79 on the minutes of 28 October 2020 – Chair mentioned the five bullet points – the last two were actions for the council – do we have any updates? Suzanne Malcolm updated the committee. The CIL strategy started in April 2021. Work is continuing and liaison with other colleagues from other departments.

Resolved:

To agree the minutes of the 28 October 2020 and the minutes of 30 November 2020 as correct records, and the chair will sign them as such.

98 Public participation

Oliver De Soissons registered to speak.

“I am asking your committee to support the creation of a landscape and nature park in the Stowood-Otmoor-Bernwood area covering 80 square kilometres- as part of implementing

the ecology Emergency resolution. This will protect this area of high-quality wildlife sites and distinctive landscapes from fragmentation and degradation by roads and development, while facilitating the creation of larger nature reserves needed to make nature more resilient to climate change.

The proposed Park's nearness to Oxford, Bicester and Wheatley makes it ideal for sustainable transport initiatives to provide equality of access to varied landscapes, quiet countryside and nature of large wildlife sites. The Cherwell Valley on the SODC northern boundary is an exciting opportunity to create a visitor focused wetland reserve and Leisure Park, accessible by foot, train and cycle.

The support of SODC is vital to implementation of the 'Park' vision. This is through its own strategic planning powers and its participation with the emerging County and regional (Ox-Cam Arc) plans, including the Local Nature Partnership and Nature Enhancement Networks, and County Transport Plan. About a quarter of the proposed Park is within SODC, so collaboration with other Councils will be vital.

Local Designation of the Park could unlock substantial investment from Government schemes on habitat creation and landscape restoration, including priority in the Agricultural support payments. Bus support funds could also become available.

I urge the committee to support further work by SODC on implementing the Park and give this area vital protection it needs and placing it high on the priority list for nature and landscape initiatives both locally and under national schemes."

Councillor Roberts asked for clarification of political support for this. Oxford City was confirmed as showing support as well as other individuals.

Councillor Wilson asked what was the nature of support wanted from the district council? It was responded, if the council accepted the idea, could it be put into Supplementary Planning Documents and a potentially bigger area strategies with other councils. Prioritise the area and join up other nature reserves.

The committee thanked Mr De Soissons for his time.

99 CEEAC review

This report was to note the findings and focus on the recommendations within. Cabinet member Councillor Andrea Powell introduced the report. The achievements of CEEAC were reviewed so far and looking forward to what it can achieve in light of the new corporate plan and declared climate emergency.

The panel asked questions and made comments.

- It was felt that this information was wanted and is very useful to Parish councils doing similar work – a way to get advice from the District.
- It was confirmed that the Council Leader will be looking at the Cabinet role in climate emergency work, with a Cabinet Lead taking more explicit responsibility.
- It was confirmed that quarterly meetings were appropriate and would tie into the corporate plan timetable. Flexibility on frequency if needed.
- Do we put the corporate plan as a standing agenda item? Fully integrate and align – this was covered in the next agenda item.
- External speakers – will this be like a select committee / fact finding? It was confirmed that this would be the thinking behind having external speakers.

- A discussion was had regarding the fact we need to remember that we were an advisory role, we are not an executive function. Cabinet delivers through CEEAC recommendations.

A summary of recommendations:

- Chair to reiterate the role of CEEAC
- New additional support from officers – two Climate Action Leads.
- Delivery of climate objectives in the corporate plan would be delivered via CEEAC – a link between Cabinet delivery and CEEAC advice.
- Engagement – need more to inform – there will be a dedicated communications plan, forums and new webpages. Councillor Lynn Lloyd will share these.
- CEEAC should work closer with the corporate plan delivery. CEEAC to advise and be part of the monitoring process. CEEAC meetings to be in tune with the release of monitoring reports.
- Biodiversity Working Group to be set up – agenda item later in the meeting.
- Structure the agenda with some standard items.
- Task and Finish groups were agreed as successful and should continue.
- Frequency of meetings - some debate on this item, it was suggested the CEEAC needed to align with Cabinet meetings also. Council Leader Councillor Cooper added that Cabinet meetings change quite a lot so might not be the best guide. Corporate plan monitoring may be the best guide, and Cabinet meetings could move if needed. Chair added that quarterly meetings can be complimented by task and finish groups, a lot of work can be done that way. A lot of officer work goes into creating reports for meetings.
- Chair of CEEAC should brief Cabinet on recommendations.
- Bring in external speakers.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report and the progress made, and for the Cabinet member and officers take on board the comments made.

100 Climate Action Plan Development

The Climate Action Plan item was introduced by Cabinet member Andrea Powell. This item was for approving the development process.

There were different strands, and different roles to play. We had set the baselines and information gathering, and we are moving from strategy to delivery.

It was clear that there are many teams involved in the work of the corporate plan. The report explained who is responsible for what, and what reporting to expect.

Questions and comments as follows:

- The subject of biodiversity had a ‘working group’ because it was considered a top priority and a new area of work for the council with a strong desire from residents to work on this area. Other priorities were communications engagement plan and the carbon management plan. There was officer support for all of these areas. These areas were also interlinked. The group will enable us to identify and take projects forward and help them get through future budget rounds.
- Paragraph 17: It was queried if the dates of the first three items had been met? Confirmed yes. Team effort is focused.
- Discussed joint working with other districts/county.

- It was agreed that the group was needed.
- The paper explained how group members would be selected.

The committee were happy to approve the development process. The CAP will have an initial test via the Town and Parish Council Forum. Thanks were given to officers involved.

Recommendation

That CEEAC recommended the proposed developed process for the Climate Action Plan to Cabinet

101 2021/22 Climate Action and Biodiversity Work Programme

The committee was asked to note progress so far and approve the 21/22 programme and approve the corporate plan monitoring reports to come to CEEAC. This item was introduced by Councillor Sue Cooper, who viewed this as a sensible way forward.

Questions and comments were as follows:

- It was felt that more long-term employment of officers supporting this work should be supported.
- A discussion was had regarding the need for more retrofitting skills locally, and the work that councillors were doing in this area, including discussions with other interested parties. OxLEP are due to report on this at the June Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting.
- Partnership working viewed as key.

The committee noted the progress and contents of this report and agreed with the recommendations in the report.

Recommendations

Committee approved the submission of the proposed 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programmes to Cabinet, and:

Committee recommended 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.

102 South Oxfordshire - Ecological Emergency Declaration and Biodiversity Steering Group

Biodiversity Working Group was the new name, since the report was published. The committee discussed the report and its recommendations.

- This will be a joint South and Vale effort. Shared working, experience and resources. Partnership working.
- Regarding feeding into Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Ox-Cam ARC – the working group will report back to CEEAC, but lobbying will come from the CEEAC directly, not the group. Any consultations could be part of a focus group that will feed back into the CEEAC. Cabinet member will feed recommendations from CEEAC to Cabinet.

- Importance of working with Parish Councils – spread good practice, there were some good groups at Parish level.

Resolved:

To note the progress and implementation plans and agree with the recommendations in the report on forming a Biodiversity Working Group.

Recommendation(s)

Committee recommended 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.

103 DEFRA Consultation launched on environmental principles

Chair asked the committee for nominations for a Task and Finish group to respond to this consultation.

Volunteers were Councillors Sue Cooper and Sue Roberts. Councillor Lynn Lloyd may be able to join, to be confirmed. Officers Andy Egan and Dominic Lamb will be involved.

Consultation ends on 2 June.

The task and finish group would meet on 17th May between 6 and 7pm to discuss the five principles.

104 Trust for Oxfordshire Environment presentation

Guest speaker, Ben Taylor of Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE) presented a PowerPoint to the committee.

The presentation in summary:

TOE was set up to administer landfill tax funds. Founded in 2011.

TOE is an independent enabler of nature restoration and enable access to green spaces.

We secured £700k funding from Network Rail.

With the advent of biodiversity net gain, we have begun operating with local district councils, to administer biodiversity net gain funding.

We are asking for district council support for how we can increase interest from businesses.

We are seeing successes across the county for biodiversity gains rather than losses. Examples – otters and bitterns.

We are proposing a nature champion scheme – a public financial pledge of support from businesses. Ringfenced funding for community based environmental projects. Small scale but impactful, and accessible.

Discussion:

When the chair invited the committee to ask questions, some councillors showed support of this partnership working. Working with universities was mentioned as a potential partnership. The council had a local business support team that TOE could get in touch with.

TOE asked for support from the council to help promote the scheme to businesses.

Recommendation

To Cabinet:

The committee agreed that the council should look into TOE and support them subject to officer recommendations on partnership working with TOE.

105 Task and finish group update

Chair was leading a task and finish group from scrutiny committee, on the lack of local retrofitting skills to fulfil the work needed for green home grants funding. This funding has since expired but will likely be replaced with another scheme.

Retrofitting was a complicated process.

This group was gathering evidence and information. The group was hoping to go back to scrutiny with a report and then to the Oxfordshire Growth Board. CEEAC will be informed for interest.

The meeting closed at 6.10 pm

Chairman

Date

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