

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Climate and Ecological Emergencies

Advisory Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 4 JULY 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING

This meeting was streamed live. The recording can be watched here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28hNMPUqLpU>

In attendance:

Councillors: Celia Wilson (Vice chair, in the chair), Sue Cooper, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie (substitute member) Kate Gregory, Lynn Lloyd, Jane Murphy, Caroline Newton, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, David Rouane.

Officers: Chloe Bunting (Senior Climate Action Officer), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer), Michelle Wells (Insight and Policy Manager), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes) and Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place)

153 Chair's announcements

Vice chair opened the meeting. Chair thanked Insight and Policy Manager for her work with the CEEAC, as she was due to leave the council.

154 Apologies for absence

Councillors Sam Casey-Rerhaye and Sue Roberts sent apologies. Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie joined to substitute for Councillor Roberts.

155 Declaration of interests

None.

156 Urgent business

None.

157 Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved:

The minutes were reviewed and agreed as a correct record.

158 Public participation

None.

159 Task and finish group update

There was no update for this meeting.

160 Update from the Environment Advisory Group (EAG) - Future Oxfordshire Partnerships

Councillor Powell updated the committee. The EAG met on 21 June. They looked at implementation of PAZCO and a tender went out for consultants to implement PAZCO, and the winning bid was from City Science. They will develop the route map and consult stakeholders.

There were workshops planned for consultees:

- Retrofit for net zero
- Net zero finance
- Decarbonising businesses

This work must integrate with the individual authorities approach to achieving net zero, to achieve collective ambitions. Oxfordshire County Council were coordinating, and the plan was due to be completed soon, in September 2022.

The EAG also received a presentation from Good Food Oxford and the Food Strategy they had developed for Oxfordshire. It was in draft form and would be presented to councils for approval in due course. There was clear alignment to climate change and healthy eating, but deliverability was important going forward.

A member asked what status the strategy will have? Was there required action on it? Does it support local food? Cabinet member explained that the EAG had only just seen the strategy and more information would emerge. We can focus on particular topics, like supporting local food economy. It covers healthy eating, food poverty and supply – an integrated approach to all these matters. Oxfordshire system leaders meeting (set up during Covid) requested this strategy.

Additionally, there was a call to take note of issues faced, in a presentation about adaptation to climate issues. Adapting to changes rather than focussing on carbon reduction. The presenter talked about the importance of having informed and activated populations and strong proactive leadership. Councillor Powell took from this the importance of communications and outreach, and to be seen to be leading by example.

The next meeting of EAG was in early September.

161 Environment Act update

There was no update, officer explained there had been consultation on various parts of the Act. Central Government had delayed producing the guidance and legislation that was due post-consultation. There may be an update by the next CEEAC.

162 Performance Reporting - Quarter 4 and the Annual Review 2021/22

Cabinet member for corporate services introduced this item.

The committee focussed on the outcomes shown in the Annual performance report. It was a critical assessment on whether we were on target against the timescales given and within the lifetime of the plan. Officers assigned a red/amber/green RAG rating to projects, and none were marked red currently.

Cabinet member noted that PRN1 had a considerable update during quarter 4, when previously there was not much change.

The Climate Action Plan will fit into the Corporate Plan performance reporting structure. The annual report allowed committee members to find focus on areas where members would like to delve deeper, ask more questions and ask for further reports.

Members of the committee were invited to ask questions and give comments for Cabinet member to consider. Two main topics were discussed by committee:

- PRN4 – why was there no progress? Councillor Cooper thought that this may be due to awaiting recruitment of new teams to help carry out the work. Farming was viewed as an important aspect by several members, as we live in a predominately rural area.
- A member expressed the opinion that actions and dates would be preferred in the reports, although acknowledged that the reporting was high level.

163 Update from the Climate Action Team

Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader updated the committee on changes to his team. He had been looking at how to increase the team's capacity.

We had Heather Saunders already working for us as a Corporate Energy Officer, mainly focussed on decarbonising our estate and assisting teams to do that.

We had recruited Jessie Fieth, as Senior Climate Action Officer. She will be working on the Climate Action Plan (CAP). This was an enabling role, and this team was not responsible for achieving many CAP projects directly, but for working with other officers across the council to track progress and enable them to take action on goals.

One-year secondments (as Senior Climate Action Officers) had been filled by Chloe Bunting and Kim Hall, funded by South Oxfordshire District Council. They will work on Thames Valley River Network, Wallingford Bathing Water project and Retrofitting and Tree planting/hedgerows – can we promote and accelerate such schemes? Tiny Forest was another area being explored (to plant 600 mixed species trees in the area the size of a tennis court – targeting urban areas).

Chloe Bunting then briefed the committee on reporting for the CAP.

Members can expect the first quarter of monitoring to be presented to the committee at the next meeting.

Quarterly reports on the Climate Action Plan will give a strategic overview of climate activity and performance, similar to that of the corporate plan. Data will be gathered from heads of service who will give narratives and updates on figures where appropriate. A RAG rating will accompany the narrative, and also short, medium and long-term project categorising.

CEAC, scrutiny and Cabinet will review the report, ensuring transparency, and publication on our website.

Members are encouraged to ask for further detail on projects of interest, by asking chair of committee to add it to the committee agenda (and in discussion with the relevant Cabinet member). The climate team can add a particular Climate Action Plan project to the work programme for further analysis, bringing the appropriate officers and Cabinet member to the meeting to discuss.

Committee were welcomed to ask questions. It was confirmed that many South and Vale projects are very similar or mirror each other, the reporting would not be double, and actions would be shared. Chloe Bunting was designated communications lead currently. There may be an officer designated to the communication team at a later date.

164 Bathing water status application

Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader shared a presentation on Wallingford Bathing Water Status. This presentation shall be added to the website alongside the minutes.

Bathing water status of rivers was not commonplace, with only two rivers achieving status. It was informative, to measure bacteria present, to help inform the public of whether it was advisable to bathe there. There were four classes of status – excellent to poor. Councillor Jo Robb started the project.

There were two bathing spots on Wallingford. It was council owned, but a part was owned by the Wallingford Bridge Trust, and we had worked with them.

There were concerns over River Thames water quality and safety, and achieving status would help inform and drive improvements, and drive stakeholder engagement in order to make improvements.

Samples will be taken, and surveys from river users, to gather data to inform the status. This will be enacted by charity Thames 21. The results were expected in the first quarter of 2023. It was possible that we would not be successful in getting the status. If status was deemed poor, this would trigger statutory monitoring by the Environment Agency. A poor or no status could help us pressurise stakeholders, with a proven case for making improvements.

This project was to help inform members of the public, not to encourage water bathing, as that was a choice, one which we want to make sure people have the right information to make their decision.

The project update was received positively.

165 Future items

Suggested future items as follows:

Councillor Lloyd suggested an update from the Chilterns Conservation Board regarding the farming and landscaping work. Councillor also updated committee that the boundary work was a two-year project, carried out by Natural England. The farming projects were expanding. It was suggested that Councillor Lloyd consider the appropriate times to bring

these topics to a meeting, and she shall approach the Board to arrange their attendance as guests at committee.

Councillor Wilson was inviting members to join an informal pre-meet to gather a list of ideas to put forward ahead of discussions at committee. She would email interested members with details. This was in reference to a previous email sent to committee by Councillor Wilson with some initial ideas.

The meeting closed at 19.40

Chair

Date

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