

# Minutes

## OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

# Climate and Ecological Emergencies

## Advisory Committee

**HELD AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY 10 JUNE 2024**  
**THIS WAS A VIRTUAL, ONLINE MEETING.**

### **In attendance:**

**Councillors:** Ali Gordon-Creed (Chair), Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Sue Cooper, James Barlow, Tony Worgan, Denise Macdonald, Leigh Rawlins, Sam James-Lawrie and Mike Giles, Peter Dragonetti (sub) and Stefan Gawrysiak.

**Cabinet members:** David Rouane (Cabinet member for climate action), Robin Bennett (Cabinet member – economic development)

**Officers:** Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Jessie Fieth (Senior Climate Action Officer), Chloe Bunting (Senior Climate Action Officer), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Nick King (Economic Development Manager), Karen Tolley (Principal Economic Development Lead), Roselle Chapman (Nature Recovery Officer).

**Guests:** Sara La Roux (Oxford Brookes Business School) and Councillor Alexandrine Kantor

### **63 Chair's announcements**

The new committee chair, Councillor Ali Gordon-Creed, introduced herself and welcomed all to the meeting. She explained how climate and nature concerns had been a part of her life for many years.

Chair gave thanks to previous members of committee – previous chair, Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye and Councillors Sam James Lawrie, Alexandrine Kantor and Ben Manning.

Chair welcomed new members – Councillors Andrea Powell, Freddie van Mierlo, Sue Cooper and Maggie Filipova-Rivers.

### **64 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrea Powell (Peter Dragonetti was present as substitute member), Andrew Tinsley and Katharine Keats Rohan.

## **65 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

## **66 Declaration of interests**

None.

## **67 Urgent business**

None.

## **68 Update from the cabinet member for Climate Action**

Councillor Rouane gave his update as Cabinet member for Climate Action. The chair moved this agenda item ahead of public participation.

It was explained that the cabinet changes reflected the logic that all cabinet members should take responsibility for climate matters under their own portfolios, but with Councillor Rouane overseeing, with Climate Action under his portfolio.

- The team had been working on the climate and nature recovery action plan – update to be provided in this meeting
- Local energy area plan – an update will be provided in the meeting
- Funding had been received for decarbonisation scheme – including trialling a new electric waste vehicle.
- Innovate UK funding had been secured for carbon-based offsetting
- Nature recovery projects had been created using CIL funds. We utilised the expertise of Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment.
- Bathing water status gained in Wallingford, which shows regular monitoring and progress in this area.

## **69 Public participation**

Jo Lazarus addressed the committee to talk about the promotion of a plant-based diet, what the council was willing to do to support this and what, if any, information would be needed by the council on this matter. Also present but not speaking was Jane Lovering.

Chair explained that there were discussions about this but she could not give an answer in the meeting.

Cabinet member Maggie Filipova-Rivers explained that the council had endorsed the Oxfordshire Food Strategy and an action plan resulted. We had been talking to many food stakeholders. She would ask officers about the progress of the action plan, which the public will be able to view in due course. The election may result in a slight delay to the progress being made, but the cabinet member would respond to the public speaker with an update.

The speaker was thanked for her contribution to the meeting.

## 70 Understanding the Net Zero Challenge for SMEs in South and Vale

Introduced by Nick King, Economic Development Manager. Karen Tolley (Principal Economic Development Lead) was also present to support the item. The slides would be provided with the minutes.

Members were updated on decarbonisation projects for small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) and the research carried out on this, before a report was published publicly.

Sara Le Roux from Oxford Brookes Business School presented and provided some results from the research carried out and the findings. She talked about barriers to action, the appetite and priority given to environmental issues by smaller businesses. Grants would be earmarked for environmental sustainability projects.

Economic Development Manager discussed that this was a pilot scheme, as future funding was unknown, and ran through the planned process, and the support and tools that were being planned for businesses who wanted to get involved. A draft grant policy was being circulated for grants up to £10k. Projects would need to demonstrate the value a project would have for sustainability/carbon reduction. There may be up to 20 grants offered in this pilot scheme.

Principal Economic Development Lead added that business engagement events, business breakfasts and a festival had been arranged. She mentioned the need for solutions to issues with business landlords that renting businesses may have, and the need to reach out to landlords.

Members asked questions and made suggestions:

- A member suggested that the type of customer would differ and react differently to changes in behaviour in a SME. For example, direct individual customers or other companies who may be looking to get their own accreditation. Could add emphasis on keeping up to date on sustainability in order to gain business, as those who do will be selected more often.
- A member suggested we needed to look at different sectors and how different the roadmap may look per sector. Should focus on the most polluted, for example, construction, and look at interventions. Can we look at micro businesses as well?
- It was confirmed that five outcomes would be monitored after grant acceptance, the grant recipients would agree to provide the data. Officers hoped to build case studies. It was confirmed that support would be in place to help people to apply, as described there would be events, guides and also the climate team had supported this work.
- A member suggested that generic accreditation would be preferable to industry-specific accreditation.
- Do we have a sense on minimum hurdle rates from other areas? Sara Le Roux explained that small businesses she had consulted with wanted a more sustainable product, but there were issues of higher costs. Cost savings were obtained from green energy and energy saving, but those were quick wins, and there was a block towards the next more expensive stage (such as retrofitting). Economic Development Manager added that energy cost was a topic asked about, for support. The aim would be to start people on a sustainable journey, so this could begin with small changes. Therefore it was difficult to quantify at this point and there was not much national data yet.

- Platforms were discussed, and the variety there were on the market, and varying preferences, measuring tools and the need for dedicated sustainability staff in businesses. There may be market leaders in due course. It could be a longer-term consideration, however the funding available was not sufficient at present to consider a platform.
- A catalogue of local providers was raised by a member as a useful tool. What can we do as a committee? Officers would like members to communicate and promote the pilot when announced. Officers welcomed any feedback.
- Data being a carbon issue. A member asked whether some funding could help businesses to make carbon cuts through their data and web services. This was an example of an issue that affects all. It was confirmed that it would be the topic of an upcoming business breakfast.

Officers and guest were thanked for their time.

## **71 Local Area Energy Planning**

Senior Climate Action Officer Jessie Fieth updated the committee.

LAEP was a spatial plan that mapped out the existing energy infrastructure in an area and evaluates future demand. There would be a range of scenarios and technology suggested to help meet net zero targets.

This was not a statutory requirement of the council, but councils tend to lead them.

We think it is important to lead on this because:

- We can have some control over our operational emissions, but district-wide there was a limit on what we can do. Having a LAEP will assist.
- Major updates were needed to our energy systems. The LAEP will produce a plan of actions to help us transition to a suitable system to deliver net zero ambitions.
- Identify solutions for our area and alternatives.
- LAEP will help us as a planning authority.
- The LAEP should be ready by summer 2025.

This workstream was county-wide. It was proposed that data collection was to occur county-wide, but detailed scenarios would be district specific, so there would be five LAEPS at the final stage. Consultants would be in place to collect the data, with officer teams assisting. Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) would decide on approving the budget. If approved, consultants would be in place in autumn.

This would be led by Oxfordshire County Council, but we would be involved, with more input in the final stages for the district specific LAEP.

CEAC could help further at the district level and this item could come back to the committee at those points.

Councillor Rouane gave an update as a member of FOP and that they would need to consider the value of the work and the impact on officer time.

A member discussed taking a light approach on this, and the chair felt that it was important to link up our other aspirations and plans and make sure it still fit our fit-for-purpose area plans.

Officer added that the links between local authorities and the energy system were not that good, and LAEP could help. Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader added that the hardest part was transitioning existing housing stock, rather than working out needs from planned

new housing. The LAEP will help inform future demands and help identify the gaps for local energy networks to inform their investment in infrastructure.

## **72 Progress on the Draft Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan**

Senior Climate Action Officer Chloe Bunting updated the committee on the updates being made to the Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan for 2024-2028 (CNRAP), including reviewing long-term targets and consideration of new legislative requirements. This plan would be adopted in line with the corporate plan at the end of the year. There was a task and finish group and staff consultation, and the team analysed the responses to bring a short-list of actions.

To report on progress, this would be in tandem with the corporate plan, a once-a-year in-depth reporting process with live data at more frequent intervals and consideration would be given to a data dashboard.

It was asked whether members of committee could be more involved, officers suggested another task and finish as an option, when there was a draft shortlist of options.

Climate adaptation route map and action plan – who was leading? It was responded that county council were developing this, and at a certain point they will commission separate work to see how it impacts their operations. We can then input into and decide whether we develop our own action plan or decide to incorporate other actions from this work.

## **73 Progress of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

An update was given by the Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader.

There had been workshops this year. The strategy was now a statutory requirement and we needed to produce one, and we will be given a clear national picture as to what we should be doing to address nature recovery, and also bring access to funding streams to help deliver targets.

The team leader ran through the stages already covered by the team, to produce maps and statements of what the local priorities were (forming the strategy). Over one thousand people attended the workshops. There was a live map on Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) website where members can input information to inform on activities happening in their wards. In May, there was a wrap-up event to feedback to those who took part in workshops. OCC were responsible for the strategy, but we had a statutory duty to support and input into this.

The next stage was to work on the draft plan, with consultation planned in September/October. There would be a specific task and finish group for CEEAC to contribute to the draft strategy. It was expected that the strategy would be published in Spring 2025.

## **74 Task and Finish group updates and future items**

As mentioned, there would be Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan task and finish group – this would be joint with Vale of White Horse District Council, due to being a joint strategy. Local Nature Recovery Strategy would have a task and finish group once out to consultation.

An idea raised by a member was to discuss the treasury and procurement strategies, from a CEEAC point of view. The team leader explained that this would tie into the approach to scope three emissions, and procurement was central to this.

A member asked for an update on trialling the climate impact tool. An officer updated that the uptake had been good – 40/50 percent of corporate decisions had used the climate impact wheel in reporting. The climate team had been approached a lot for advice. It was noted that some reports were not suitable for this but that these examples were all part of the learnings from the trial. A report would be written to senior management to recommend continuing with this process, possibly becoming mandatory in future.

UK100: An update was given that SODC was still in the process of applying to join. We were due to meet with UK100 to confirm.

A member asked about following up on meeting actions. Officer explained that updates were provided to members – this could come to CEEAC.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chair

Date

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