

# **Minutes**

of a meeting of the

## **Climate Emergency**

## **Advisory Committee**



**held on Wednesday 1 July 2020 at 6.00 pm**  
**This was a virtual, online meeting**

**Open to the public, including the press**

### **Present:**

Members: Councillors David Grant (Chair), Amos Duveen (Vice-Chair), Eric Batts, Eric de la Harpe, Hayleigh Gascoigne, Alison Jenner, and Max Thompson

Officers: Steve Culliford, Steven Corrigan, Bex Harvey, Dominic Lamb, Adrianna Partridge, Heather Saunders and Michelle Wells

Also present: Councillors Debby Hallett and Bob Johnston

### **9. Chairman's announcements**

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, a green, virtual meeting to reflect the green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The chairman re-ordered the agenda by moving 'public participation' item so that it could be considered earlier in the meeting and asked that this was replicated for future agendas.

### **10. Apologies for absence**

None

### **11. Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to adopt the minutes of the committee meeting held on 1 June 2020 and agree that the chairman signs them as a correct record.

### **12. Declarations of interest**

None

### **13. Urgent business**

None

## **14. Public participation**

Extinction Rebellion Abingdon submitted the following written statement, complete with a model supplementary planning document. This was circulated to the committee in advance of and read out at the meeting:

"We attach a model Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that has been designed to help Local Planning Authorities to bring their policies up to date and treat the emergency declared by the VWHDC in 2019 as an 'emergency' and not wait until 2021 when a year would have been wasted.

This model SPD covers a range of development types and addresses the climate and biodiversity impacts, including zero carbon building and sustainable transport infrastructure for all new developments. An SPD requires 6 weeks for public consultation (may be more time for evidence gathering that has been done in the model SPD). It is based on a range of Government published and/or supported documents and, when adopted, should carry significant weight in making planning decisions by the Local Planning Authority and at appeal."

The committee welcomed the suggestion of detailed planning guidance to tackle the climate emergency. It was agreed that this suggestion should be considered in detail at a task and finish group meeting when the new Local Plan Design Guide was to be considered. This was due to take place in July.

The committee also discussed South Oxfordshire District Council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee's action in seeking legal advice. The committee had asked whether new laws on new development being zero-carbon in build and operation could override the Local Plan. The committee supported South Oxfordshire's committee's request for legal advice.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) ask the committee's task and finish group to consider the suggestion of a supplementary planning document to tackle the climate emergency, when the group considers the draft Local Plan Design Guide in July; and
- (b) support South Oxfordshire District Council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee in seeking legal advice on whether new laws requiring new development to be carbon-zero in build and operation can override the Local Plan.

## **15. The Corporate Plan 2020-24**

The committee was addressed by the Cabinet member responsible for the corporate plan. The Cabinet member outlined Cabinet's developing thinking on the new draft corporate plan for 2020 to 2024, in particular highlighting the vision, themes, programmes and example projects, especially in relation to the climate emergency. The ability of the council to deliver would be largely dependent on the continued availability of finance and on the future of local government in Oxfordshire.

The committee considered the draft corporate plan vision, themes, programmes and example projects in detail. The committee particularly welcomed the green concepts in the plan. However, councillors suggested some changes and asked the Cabinet member to

consider these before Cabinet approved the draft plan for consultation during the summer. These suggestions included:

- In the Vision statement, amend the second sentence to read: “We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, **within the scientific (or ecological) constraints of our physical environment on planet earth.**”
- In all themes, consider emphasising sustainability
- In theme 1, providing the homes people need, amend paragraph 1.2 to read: “We will aim to provide a mix of tenures in each development **to build sustainable homes in balanced and sustainable communities.**”
- Theme 2, tackling the climate emergency, received the committee’s support, but suggest amending paragraph 2.1 to read: “A climate emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, **such as our own buildings, vehicles, leisure and arts centres, working towards our targets.**”
- In theme 4, building stable finances, paragraph 4.2, clarify the term ‘financially sensible’ to reflect the need to protect finances for the long-term benefit of residents
- In theme 6, working in an open and inclusive way, the committee supported the example project on a youth council and would like to see equalities mentioned

**RESOLVED:** to request the Cabinet member for corporate services to take the suggested changes set out above into consideration before recommending the draft corporate plan to Cabinet on 10 July 2020.

## 16. The Green Recovery from Covid-19

The committee considered the report of the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations. The report provided a summary of the national government and Oxfordshire councils’ anticipated approach to the Covid-19 recovery, predominantly focusing on a green recovery, although elements of economic, health and social recovery were included also.

The committee noted that officers were developing the council’s wider recovery plan, working closely with partners across the Oxfordshire. The recovery plan would link to internal themes such as business continuity, the corporate plan, the transformation agenda, and workforce and culture. Furthermore, it would take into consideration the financial impact of Covid-19 and any new obligations from the government. This presented an opportunity for the committee to reflect whether it wished to re-prioritise, re-focus, or suggest some new areas of work for inclusion in the recovery plan, or for the committee to update its year one work programme.

The committee noted that Oxfordshire County Council had published its plans for greener streets. The committee welcomed any measures that reduced car use and made streets greener and more pedestrian friendly. It was noted that this council had representation on the county council’s working group to influence these measures. The chairman reported that he had written to the county’s leader on this topic, as requested by committee at its last meeting. Officers agreed to send committee members to website link to view the county council’s plans.

The committee applauded the efforts made by officers in keeping the council’s services running under the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Most staff were now working from their homes. The committee asked officers to consider whether a future staff survey could include questions around the impact of the lockdown on their working patterns, particularly in commuting to and from and travelling during their work.

The committee concurred with the principles set out in the report but was keen to influence the recovery plan. It was agreed that this should be referred to the committee's task and finish group for detailed consideration.

Officers also reported on the Local Government Association's webinar that had looked at green recovery best practice. Officers agreed to provide committee members with the link to view the event online.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) note the key themes and policy thinking of using the Covid-19 recovery to accelerate and prioritise green initiatives and contribute to climate change action, and how this could impact the progression and steer of the projects within the Climate Emergency Year One Work Programme 2020/21 and feed into the council's emerging recovery plans; and
- (b) ask the committee's task and finish group to consider the recovery plan in more detail.

## **17. Update from the task and finish group**

The committee received feedback from its task and finish group on the presentation by the consultant, Aether, on the Vale's carbon emissions baseline. The committee had been unable to receive the presentation at its last meeting and had referred this to the task and finish group for consideration. The task and finish group had welcomed the report and one of its members gave an update to the committee.

The committee then discussed the draft report and presentation from Aether. The committee supported the conclusions and the scope of Aether's draft report but considered that the council should aspire to reduce *all* emissions, whether they were measurable or not. This should be raised with Aether before the final report was produced. The committee also queried which year Aether had used for its baseline figures. However, the committee accepted the baseline figure provided by Aether in its draft report.

**RESOLVED:** to recommend Cabinet to accept the consultant's report from Aether on the Vale of White Horse district carbon emissions baseline but the council should aim to reduce all emissions, whether they are measurable or not.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm