

Internal report

Vale CEAC review: feedback from committee and Cabinet surveys

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

A review of Committee and Cabinet feedback on the effectiveness of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) to date, and its alignment to the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024.

April 2021



CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT	7
ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY	7
KEY FINDINGS – COMMITTEE SURVEY	8
KEY FINDINGS – CABINET SURVEY	20
HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION	27
FURTHER INFORMATION	27

Note: We report in percentages when there are more than 100 responses. When stating percentages or numbers in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage (or number) of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5

Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received.

SUMMARY

This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the results of the Vale CEAC review surveys. Two online surveys were used, one for committee members and substitutes (CEAC survey) and another survey for Cabinet members (Cabinet survey). The surveys were open for two and a half weeks, between 19 February and 8 March 2021.

A total of 7 completed responses were received from committee members and substitutes, and 4 completed responses were received from Cabinet members. As there are 7 CEAC members and 7 substitutes in total, this represents a response rate of 71% (5 out of 7) among members, and of 29% (2 out of 7) among substitutes. The response rate among Cabinet members was 50% (4 out of 8).

The surveys were conducted to help the Insight and Policy Team review the effectiveness of the CEAC to date. This information will be used to help inform and shape recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the committee, and to ensure that its work is aligned with the aims and objectives of the Vale Corporate Plan.

Summary of key findings:

- The majority of contributors to both the CEAC and Cabinet surveys believed that the committee had fulfilled most aspects of its advisory role effectively.
- CEAC members consistently highlighted the need to increase the level of resource given to both the work of the committee and the wider climate change agenda if meaningful progress was to be achieved.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents to the CEAC survey considered that the meetings of the committee had been productive and well structured.
- Most contributors did not want the name of the committee changed from CEAC to CEEAC.
- Contributors wished to see the CEAC be kept informed about the advancement of the Corporate Plan – with possibly an enhanced scrutiny role in relation to relevant projects and themes.

Key findings from the CEAC survey

- A majority of respondents to the CEAC survey said that they agreed that the CEAC had fulfilled its advisory role to the Cabinet effectively in respects of:
 - a) Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.
 - b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.
 - c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

- There was a more mixed response regarding the CEAC's effectiveness when it came to:
 - d) Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:
 - national legally binding targets on the climate emergency
 - countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)
 - the council's own targets on the climate emergency
 - the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan
 - e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

Contributors highlighted limits to what the committee could achieve, a lack of information and tight deadlines, such as for consultation submissions, as reasons for the CEAC being less effective in these areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Task and Finish groups could be used to address this. It is recommended that Task and Finish groups are assembled to work alongside officers on the Corporate Plan, communications and engagement, Zero Carbon definition and relevant consultations. They will provide opportunities to give a sense of focus and work in more detail on areas of interest for members. Each Task and Finish group created should be led by a CEAC member to facilitate and manage input to the groups with feedback from Task and Finish groups as a regular standing item on all CEAC agendas.

- Most contributors (3 out of the 5 – two other contributors said they 'don't know') did not want the name of the committee changed from CEAC to CEEAC to reflect the ecological emergency. 3 main reasons were cited for this:
 - The Vale has not yet declared an ecological emergency at time of survey
 - It is an unnecessary distraction from the major work of the committee
 - The name of the committee is in danger of becoming a *mouthful*
- Contributors proposed that the CEAC should be kept informed about the advancement of the Corporate Plan. In addition, they also suggested that the committee should have an enhanced role in scrutinising the council's delivery of projects related to the climate, biodiversity and nature-related themes.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the CEAC plays a formal role in the monitoring of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and reviews the quarterly performance reports that will be set out as part of the Councils Performance Management Framework (PMF) This will allow the committee to provide advice and guidance to Cabinet on the delivery of projects in relation to the tackling the

Climate Emergency. The Corporate Plan 2020-24 has been designed to be agile, so projects within the plan will bend, flex and evolve, which further supports the need for the CEAC to play a key role in advising on its delivery.

Further, it is proposed that a Biodiversity Steering Group is formed that reports directly into CEAC, this group will be central to the scoping of projects in the Corporate Plan around biodiversity and nature and help to inform future discretionary growth to fund this work.

CEAC will now be supported by two additional officers, which will strengthen support and resource available to the committee significantly. Having CEAC meetings structured around the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 will provide structure, a direct link to Council business and a greater sense of purpose to the meetings, going forward.

- The majority of respondents (5 out of 7) considered that the meetings of the CEAC had been productive.
- The majority of contributors (5 out of 6) judged that the meetings of the CEAC had been well structured.
- Respondents rated task and finish groups as the most useful additional method in helping the CEAC fulfil its role. It averaged 3.38 out of 5.00, compared to an average of 3.13 for formal training, 2.88 for informal briefings and 2.12 for visits.
- Opinion was evenly split over the frequency of CEAC meetings. 3 contributors believed that they should occur every 2 months, while another 3 preferred once a quarter. 1 responded with 'other' and commented on having time to respond to consultations.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the CEAC align with the Corporate Plan performance monitoring cycle and meet quarterly.

- Respondents believed that the CEAC's main focus should be on local issues but that that national and global matters with discernible district level impacts should also be considered (e.g. planning regulations).
- Influencing decision-making (in the council via CEACs advisory role with Cabinet and also nationally where providing input into a consultation for example) was considered to be the main achievement of the committee (mentioned by 3 out of 4 respondents). This was followed by making climate change a priority and quantifying the council's carbon footprint.
- Respondents highlighted project work (3 out of four) and public engagement on climate change (2 out of four) as things that had worked well.
- Contributors suggested that the following could be improved:
 - Creating a pathway to net zero
 - More influence on decision-making

- More project work on biodiversity and nature recovery.

RECOMMENDATION

The introduction of climate and ecological implications on the Councils format report templates, enables more effective check, challenge and influence on all decision making. It is recommended that the Chair of CEAC and the Cabinet Lead review this section of formal reports and ensure it considers all impacts for the Council.

The development of the Climate Action Plan that will be informed by carbon emissions modelling will provide the Council's roadmap to achieving their carbon reduction targets.

It is proposed that a Biodiversity Steering Group is formed that reports directly into CEAC, this group will be central to the scoping of projects in the Corporate Plan around biodiversity and nature and help to inform future discretionary growth to fund this work.

- Concerns were raised throughout the feedback about the need to increase the level of resource being given to the work of the CEAC and the wider climate agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

CEAC will now be supported by two additional officers, which will strengthen support and resource available to the committee significantly.

This area of work has moved from policy development into delivery, so consideration should be given to the longer-term management and co-ordination of the delivery of projects in this area alongside officers, CEAC and Cabinet

Key findings from the Cabinet survey

- All respondents to the Cabinet survey either agreed or strongly agreed that the advice and recommendations from the CEAC to Cabinet has been useful.
- The majority of respondents stated that the CEAC had fulfilled its advisory role to the Cabinet effectively in respects of:
 - a) Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.
 - b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.
 - c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.
- There was a more mixed response regarding CEAC's effectiveness when it came to:
 - d) Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:
 - national legally binding targets on the climate emergency

- countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)
- the council's own targets on the climate emergency
- the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan

e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

- Engaging with stakeholders and raising the profile of the CEAC were regarded as the main achievements of the committee.
- Providing feedback to Cabinet was highlighted by respondents as the main thing that had worked well.
- Contributors suggested that the following could be improved:
 - More involvement of the CEAC in Cabinet's work
 - Promoting climate change work
 - A greater understanding of the CEAC and Cabinet's respective remits.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Chair of CEAC and Cabinet Lead receive monthly briefings from the Strategic Lead for Climate Action to ensure information is shared.

It is also recommended that the Chair of CEAC attends the Cabinet meeting after each CEAC to provide an update to Cabinet under the item "recommendations from other committees" to ensure there is an effective and open dialogue between the two meetings.

The Cabinet Lead should also actively flag any matters across other portfolios where CEAC advice, input or guidance would be beneficial in advance of any formal decision-making, so it can be added to the CEACs forward plan of agenda items.

BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was established as a balanced cross-party committee of Vale of White Horse District Council in 2019 and held its first meeting in October of that year.

The role of the committee is to advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.

With the approval of the new corporate plan last autumn, this was a good time for committee and Cabinet members to review the effectiveness of the committee to date and to identify recommendations for improving effectiveness and alignment to the corporate plan going forward.

This review is being led by Cllrs David Grant, Catherine Webber and Debby Hallett and supported by officers Suzanne Malcolm, Michelle Wells and Andy Egan.

Through a survey we asked for feedback from CEAC committee members and substitutes. We also asked Cabinet members in a separate survey for their views in relation to the committee's advisory role.

ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

A summary of the engagement and reporting methodology used is below:

- the council's online survey platform, Smart Survey, was used to develop 2 online surveys, 1 for CEAC members and substitutes, and a shorter version for Cabinet members;
- an 18-day engagement period was provided to gain responses; between 19 February and 8 March 2021;
- an email notification was sent to CEAC members and their substitutes of the survey, with a link to provide access to it;
- a separate email notification was sent to Cabinet members of the survey, with a link to provide access to it;
- 2 reminder emails were sent to CEAC members and their substitutes, on 3 March and 5 March;
- 1 remainder email was sent to Cabinet members on 3 March;
- respondents were not required to provide answers to any of the questions. Free text boxes were used throughout the survey to capture comments;
- a total of 7 completed responses to the committee survey were received; 4 responses to the Cabinet survey were received;
- a summary of the comments from both surveys is included in this engagement report;
- feedback was anonymous and any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify any1 has been redacted and will not be shared or published;
- some spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors in the original comments have been corrected in the main body of this report.

KEY FINDINGS – COMMITTEE SURVEY

The key quantitative and qualitative findings from the committee members and substitutes survey are summarised below. A summary of the key findings from the Cabinet survey are in the next section of this report.

The only question that was required to be answered in the online survey asked in what capacity the responder was replying to the survey, as a CEAC member or as a substitute. All other questions were optional.

The survey provided an opportunity to indicate to what extent responders agreed with how effective CEAC has been in fulfilling its advisory role in different areas of its remit and how aligned CEAC is to the corporate plan. There were also opportunities to make comments and suggestions on the effectiveness, productivity, structure and frequency of CEAC meetings. Comments were also sought about the three main achievements of the committee, things that worked well and things that could be improved.

There were 7 completed responses to this survey. All respondents answered the question unless stated otherwise.

Q1. Are you responding as a CEAC member or a substitute?

5 respondents said they were CEAC members and 2 said they were substitutes.

3 of the members had attended all of the meetings, 1 attended four meetings and 1 didn't state how many. 1 of the substitutes attended 1 meeting, the other didn't attend any meetings.

Q1. Are you responding as:			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	a CEAC member	71.4%	5
2	a CEAC substitute	28.6%	2
Please tell us how many CEAC meetings you have attended:			6
Answered 7			

CEAC remit

Q2. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (a) **Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.

The majority of respondents (4) agreed that the CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its remit in this area. 2 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 respondent disagreed.

Q2. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?		
(a) Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.		
		Response Total
1	Strongly agree	0
2	Agree	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree	2
4	Disagree	1
5	Strongly disagree	0
6	Don't know	0
		Answered 7

4 comments were received in relation to this question.

All 4 contributors were positive about the work the CEAC had undertaken in this area. They believed that the committee had functioned well in reviewing information and putting forwards recommendations to Cabinet.

1 respondent did, however, wish to make clear that the long-term nature of issue had limited what the CEAC had been able to achieve in terms of immediate recommendations to the Cabinet.

It was also implied that the committee could achieve more with additional resources: *It does a good job given the level of resource it has.*

Q3. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and improving the council's environmental performance.

6 survey respondents answered this question. 1 responder skipped the question.

5 out of 6 respondents to some extent agreed that the CEAC has been fulfilling its role in this area, with 1 of those strongly agreeing. The 1 other respondent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q3. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?		
(b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.		
		Response Total
Strongly agree		1
Agree		4
Neither agree nor disagree		1
Disagree		0
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 6

4 comments were received in relation to this question.

While the consensus was that the CEAC had been effective in fulfilling its functions in respects of reviewing the internal operations of the council, 1 contributor believed that its effect had been limited.

The issue of the long-term nature of the CEAC's work and the limiting impact that this has had in terms of immediate recommendations to Cabinet was once again mentioned.

Q4. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in advising Cabinet on providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability and on facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

The majority of respondents (4) agreed that the CEAC has been effectively fulfilling its remit in the area in question. 2 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 respondent disagreed.

Q4. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

			Response Total
1	Strongly agree		0
2	Agree		4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2
4	Disagree		1
5	Strongly disagree		0
6	Don't know		0
			Answered 7

3 comments were received in response to this question.

All 3 contributors believed that in terms of engagement and community leadership the CEAC had played a positive role to some extent. 1 suggested that a reason for the encouraging public feedback to the corporate plan was the Cabinet's acceptance of the committee's recommendations.

Concerns were, nevertheless, expressed about the committee's engagement with town and parish councils and the local business community. While it was recognised that efforts had been made in this area, they have proved largely unsuccessful. It was, however, hoped that the recent appointment of climate change lead officers dealing with communications, and the council's membership of Oxfordshire Greentech, would help to address some of these issues.

Q5. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(d) Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:

- **national legally binding targets on the climate emergency**
- **countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)**
- **the council's own targets on the climate emergency**
- **the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in advising Cabinet on: national legally binding targets on the climate emergency; countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP); the council's own targets on the climate emergency and the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan.

3 respondents agreed that the CEAC has been effective in advising Cabinet in this area, 3 neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 respondent disagreed.

Q5. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(d) Advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of:

- national legally binding targets on the climate emergency
- countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP)
- the council's own targets on the climate emergency
- the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan

		Response Total
Strongly agree		0
Agree		3
Neither agree nor disagree		3
Disagree		1
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 7

5 comments were received in response to this question.

While the consensus amongst contributors was positive, 1 suggested that there were limits to what the CEAC had/could do in this area: *We still just seem to have our hands tied on a lot of these issues.*

Another response again implied that while the committee was doing a good job in this area, its work was constrained by the available resources.

Q6. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to climate change.

The majority of respondents (4) neither agreed nor disagreed that the CEAC has been effectively fulfilling its role in this area. 1 respondent agreed that it has, and 2 respondents disagreed.

Q6: To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

		Response Total
Strongly agree		0
Agree		1
Neither agree nor disagree		4
Disagree		2
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 7

5 comments were received in relation to this question.

4 of the responses suggested that the CEAC's effectiveness in this area had been limited. Many highlighted a lack of information or knowledge about the work that the council was undertaking and suggested that if the committee was fulfilling a role in this area it was not through the usual channels.

The issue of timing was also raised with decisions having to be made relatively quickly rather than waiting for the next meeting of the CEAC. It was suggested that a possible solution to this would be for the council to develop a list of grant-ready projects and prepared plans. These would then be in place for when funding opportunities became available.

New name?

Q7. Should the name of the committee be changed to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEAC)?

Respondents were asked whether the Climate Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEAC) should be changed to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC).

The majority of respondents (3) answered 'No', indicating that the name of the committee should not change. 2 respondents answered 'Yes', indicating that it should, and 2 respondents answered that they do not know.

Q7. Should the name of the committee be changed to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC)?

		Response Total

Q7. Should the name of the committee be changed to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC)?		
		Response Total
Yes		2
No		3
Don't know		2
		Answered 7

6 comments were received in response to this question.

2 contributors believed that such a change should only be made when/if the council declares an ecological emergency. It was their opinion that the committee did not have the power to unilaterally rename itself and/or extend its remit.

2 other respondents did not believe that such a change was necessary. They suggested that perhaps a brief explanatory note in the committee's remit was all that was necessary. 1 thought that focusing on name changes distracted from the major issues at hand, while the other was concerned that adding yet another word to the committee would create a mouthful.

Concerns were also expressed about whether the council had sufficient ecological expertise.

Aligning with the Corporate Plan

Q8. The Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan highlights the council's priorities and strategic themes for the next few years. Most of the themes within the plan have projects that relate in some way to climate, biodiversity and nature - here is the project list. We are interested to know if you have any ideas or comments on how CEAC can best support the delivery of the projects within the corporate plan themes that relate in some way to climate, biodiversity and nature. Please tell us which theme you are referring to and the project reference in your comments.

5 responses were received to this question; 2 responders skipped it.

Concerns were raised regarding the resourcing of projects and whether they would be deliverable. It was suggested that at least some would remain unrealised with the current levels of support and funding.

Contributors also proposed that the CEAC should be kept informed about the advancement of projects and be able to scrutinise Cabinet members on the progress of the council towards delivering the climate, biodiversity and nature related themes within the corporate plan.

1 response also highlighted the importance of the committee giving a voice to residents on the corporate plan themes.

Q9. If you have any general comments about the role of CEAC in relation to the corporate plan, please use the space below to tell us:

4 responses were received to this question.

2 highlighted the positive impact of the CEAC. They argued that the advice and input that it had provided in relation to the corporate plan had been beneficial – even if what could be achieved was limited by resources and capacity.

The other 2 contributions suggested respectively:

- A system for determining when topics should be discussed by the committee
- A process for the delivery of the climate-related aspects of the corporate plan.

The meetings

Q10. How productive do you think the meetings have been on a scale of 0 to 5? (0 meaning not very productive and 5 meaning very productive)

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the productivity of CEAC meetings by assigning a score between 0 and 5, with 0 being not very productive, and 5 very productive.

Most of the respondents who answered this question considered the meetings to be quite productive and assigned a score of 4. This was the preferred choice for 5 respondents, whilst the remaining 2 contributors said that CEAC’s meetings have been somewhat unproductive and assigned a score of 2.

Q10. How productive do you think the meetings have been on a scale of 0 to 5? (0 meaning not very productive and 5 meaning very productive)		
Options		Response Total
0		0
1		0
2		2
3		0
4		5
5		0
		Answered 7

Respondents had the opportunity to leave comments to complement their answers. 3 comments were made with regards to this question.

In their comments, respondents pointed to the positive approach and enthusiasm of members, whilst stressing that meetings have been mostly informative. Another contributor expressed appreciation for public engagement at CEAC’s meetings.

Q11. How well structured do you think the meetings have been on a scale of 0 to 5? (0 meaning not very well structured and 5 meaning very well structured)

In this question respondents were asked to rate how well structured CEAC’s meetings have been, with 0 being not very well structured and 5 very well structured.

This question was answered by 6 out of 7 survey respondents, with one respondent skipping it.

1 respondent considered the meetings to be neither very well structured nor not very well structured and assigned a score of 3. 4 respondents assigned a score of 4, indicating that meetings have been somewhat well structured, and 1 respondent assigned the highest score of 5 and, therefore, considers the meetings to have been very well structured.

Q11. How well structured do you think the meetings have been on a scale of 0 to 5? (0 meaning not very well structured and 5 meaning very well structured)		
Options		Response Total
0		0
1		0
2		0
3		1
4		4
5		1
		Answered 6

Among the 4 comments received on this question, 2 said that they could not add any further insight on the structure of the meetings, 1 commented positively on the chair and another 1 on officers’ reports.

Other ideas

Q12. In addition to committee meetings (virtual or otherwise), what other methods do you think would be most useful in helping CEAC fulfil its role? Use the sliding scale below, where 0 means not very useful and 5 means very useful.

Task and Finish Groups (sub-group who would work on a specific project)

Informal briefings (out of committee session with special topic briefings /information sessions)

Visits (site visits such as to a solar farm)

Formal training (for example on topics such as carbon literacy)

In this question respondents were asked to rate 4 other methods that could help CEAC fulfil its role in addition to committee meetings. These methods were: task and finish groups, informal briefings, visits and formal training.

Respondents were asked to assign a score between 0 and 5, with 0 being not very useful and 5 very useful.

Task and finish groups was the option that had the highest average score (3.38) and was, therefore, considered to be the most useful among all other methods. This option was followed

closely by formal training (3.12) and then at some distance by informal briefings (2.88) and visits (2.12).

Q12. In addition to committee meetings (virtual or otherwise), what other methods do you think would be most useful in helping CEAC fulfil its role? Use the sliding scale below, where 0 means not very useful and 5 means very useful.

Task and Finish Groups (sub group who would work on a specific project)
Informal briefings (out of committee session with special topic briefings /information sessions)

Visits (site visits such as to a solar farm)

Formal training (for example on topics such as carbon literacy)

Item	Average	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Total Responses
1 Task and Finish Groups	3.38	0	5	1.73	7
2 Informal briefings	2.88	0	5	1.76	7
3 Visits	2.12	0	4	1.76	7
4 Formal training	3.12	0	5	1.9	7
Comments:					5
Answered					7

5 comments were provided with reference to this question. Among them, 2 contributors stressed the importance of all 4 methods, and a further 2 the need for training, although voicing some reservations on visits. Finally, 1 respondent pointed to the lack of evidence on the achievements of task and finish groups.

How often?

Q13. Up until now the CEAC was supposed to be meeting every other month (though that schedule was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic). More recently we decided to meet quarterly and we want to check if this frequency should be kept or changed going forward

How frequently do you think CEAC meetings should take place? Note that they must held at least 4 times a year (quarterly) in order to meet corporate plan review requirements.

Respondents were asked how frequently CEAC meetings should take place. The suggested answers were 'every 2 months', 'quarterly' or 'other'.

Both 'every 2 months' and 'quarterly' received 2 votes. 1 respondent answered 'other' but no other specific frequency was suggested in the comments.

Q13. Up until now the CEAC was supposed to be meeting every other month (though that schedule was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic). More recently we decided to meet quarterly and we want to check if this frequency should be kept or changed going forward

How frequently do you think CEAC meetings should take place? Note that they must held at least 4 times a year (quarterly) in order to meet corporate plan review requirements.

		Response Total
Every 2months (6 times a year)		3
Quarterly (4 times a year)		3
Other (please specify):		1
		Answered 7

Agenda items

Q14. Do you have any ideas or suggestions on how CEAC could keep an appropriate balance between local, national and global items on its meeting agendas?

5 responses were received in relation to this question.

3 of the contributors stressed the importance of local issues. They suggested that this should be the main focus of the CEAC’s agenda but that national and global issues with discernible district level impacts should also feature (e.g. planning regulations).

1 response proposed that once a full plan for net zero had been developed, this would then help to drive and shape the agenda of the committee.

It was mooted that, given the level of in-house expertise, outside consultants should be used to shape the agenda of the CEAC.

Your 3 things...

Q15. What do you consider to be the 3 main achievements of the committee?

This question asked members and substitutes to list the 3 main achievements of the CEAC.

As for previous ones, answering this question was optional and 4 out of 7 respondents provided an answer. More specifically, 3 respondents listed 3 main achievements of the committee, whilst 1 respondent only provided one.

Among the answers provided, the achievement that respondents mentioned the most was ‘influencing decision making’, which was mentioned 3 times. The following 2 achievements were both mentioned twice: ‘making Climate Change a priority’ and ‘quantifying the council’s carbon footprint’.

Finally, 3 further achievements were all mentioned once: teamwork; effective leadership; good staff.

Q16. What are the top 3 things that you think worked well?

This question asked CEAC members and substitutes to list the top 3 things that in their opinion have worked well.

This question was answered by 4 out of 7 respondents. As for the previous question, 3 respondents listed 3 things that worked well whilst 1 respondent listed only 1 thing.

Among the answers provided, the thing that worked well which was mentioned the most by respondents was 'project work (i.e. on carbon footprint)', which was mentioned 3 times. 'Public engagement on climate change' was mentioned twice, whilst the following 3 things were all mentioned once: influencing decision-making, prioritising and cultural change.

Q17. What 3 things do you think could be improved?

This question asked respondents to list 3 things that they think can be improved.

This question was answered by 4 out of 7 respondents but only 2 of them listed 3 things to improve, whilst the remaining 2 listed 1 thing only.

Among the answers provided, there wasn't 1 thing that was mentioned the most, but rather multiple things that were mentioned twice each. These are:

- Creating a pathway to net zero;
- More influence on decision making
- More project work on biodiversity and nature recovery.

Finally, 1 respondent suggested liaising with similar committee or environmental groups at county and national level.

Q18. Do you have any other comments about CEAC that you would like us to consider as part of this review?

This question asked if the respondent had any other comments about CEAC they would like to be considered as part of this review. 4 responses were received to this question.

Concerns were raised about the small amount of resource being given to the work of the CEAC and the wider climate agenda. It was argued that this was holding back progress on this issue and was undermining attempts to bring about change.

Anxieties were also expressed about a perceived slow pace of the work being undertaken.

KEY FINDINGS – CABINET SURVEY

The key quantitative and qualitative findings from the Cabinet survey are summarised below.

All questions were optional.

The survey provided an opportunity to indicate the extent to which responders agreed with how useful CEAC’s advice and recommendations is to Cabinet, how effective CEAC has been in fulfilling its advisory role in different areas of its remit, and how aligned CEAC is to the corporate plan. Comments were also sought about the 3 main achievements of the committee, things that worked well and things that could be improved.

There were 4 responses to this survey. All respondents answered each question unless stated otherwise.

Q1. To what extent do you agree that the advice and recommendations from CEAC to Cabinet is useful?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the advice and the recommendations given by CEAC to Cabinet is useful.

All to some extent agreed that the advice given to Cabinet was useful, with 2 indicating that they strongly agreed and 2 that they agreed.

2 respondents strongly agreed that the recommendations given to Cabinet were useful, 1 agreed and 1 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q1. To what extent do you agree that the advice and recommendations from CEAC to Cabinet is useful?							
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Response Total
Advice given to Cabinet	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Recommendations given to Cabinet	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
							Answered 4

2 comments were received in response to this question. Both praised the advice and recommendations that the CEAC had provided to the Cabinet, with 1 highlighting the utility of getting a different perspective based upon more detailed investigation of the issues.

CEAC remit

Q2. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (a) Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in reviewing and making recommendations to Cabinet on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.

3 responded that they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in this regard and 1 responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q2. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?		Response Total
(a) Reviewing and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through its policies and practices.		
Strongly agree		0
Agree		3
Neither agree nor disagree		1
Disagree		0
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 4

1 comment was received in relation to this question. It praised the work that the CEAC had undertaken in bringing forwards proposals and suggestions which the Cabinet has been able to support. In addition, it proposed that Cabinet should consider sending issues to the committee that wouldn't necessarily have come before the CEAC as a matter of course in order to get their input.

Q3. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and improving the council's environmental performance.

3 respondents agreed to some extent that the CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its function in this area; 1 strongly agreeing and 2 agreeing. 1 respondent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q3. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?		Response Total
(b) Reviewing the internal operations of the council with a view to promoting sustainability, adopting best practice and strengthening the council's environmental performance.		
Strongly agree		1
Agree		2
Neither agree nor disagree		1
Disagree		0
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 4

No comments were received in response to this question.

Q4. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

Cabinet members were asked to what extent they agreed that the CEAC has been effective in advising Cabinet on providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability and on facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

3 respondents agreed that the CEAC has been effective in this area of its role, while 1 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q4. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?
(c) Providing community leadership on the climate emergency and sustainability, facilitating and engaging public sector partners, businesses, community groups and the public.

		Response Total
Strongly agree		0
Agree		3
Neither agree nor disagree		1
Disagree		0
Strongly disagree		0
Don't know		0
		Answered 4

1 comment was received in relation to this question. It praised the work that the CEAC had been doing regarding public leadership and engagement – suggesting that it was providing an important link between the community and the council on climate related matters.

The respondent proposed that the committee could hold interactive sessions on agreed topics to help Cabinet when it came to making decisions.

Q5. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (d) Advising on how the council can contribute to delivery of**
- **national legally binding targets on the climate emergency**
 - **countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership**
 - **the council's own targets on the climate emergency**
 - **the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan**

Question 5 asked respondents to what extent they agreed that CEAC has been effective in advising Cabinet on how the council can contribute to delivery of national legally binding targets on the climate emergency, countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership, the council's own targets on the climate emergency and the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan.

1 respondent strongly agreed that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling this advisory role, and another 1 simply agreed. The remaining 2 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q5. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (d) Advising on how the council can contribute to delivery of**
- national legally-binding targets on the climate emergency
 - countywide targets on the climate emergency through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership
 - the council's own targets on the climate emergency
 - the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan

Answer Choice	Response Total
Strongly agree	1
Agree	1
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Don't know	0
Comments:	1
Answered 4	

1 comment was received in response to this question. It stressed the importance of the action plans in the delivery of this work.

Q6. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

- (e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.**

This question asked respondents to what extent they agreed that CEAC has been effective in making recommendations to Cabinet on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

1 respondent strongly agreed that CEAC has been effective in making these recommendations to Cabinet, 2 respondents agreed, and 1 respondent disagreed.

1 comment was received in response to this question. While the contributor noted that the council had submitted a few bids for external funding, they suggested that the CEAC could do more in this area.

Q6. To what extent do you agree that CEAC has been effective in fulfilling its advisory role to Cabinet in the following area of its remit?

(e) Making recommendations on bids for external funding relating to the climate emergency.

Answer Choice	Response Total
Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Don't know	0
Comments:	1
Answered 4	

Aligning with the Corporate Plan

Q7. The Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan highlights the council's priorities and strategic themes for the next few years. Most of the themes within the plan have projects that relate in some way to climate, biodiversity and nature - here is the project list. We are interested to know if you have any ideas or comments on how CEAC can best support the delivery of the projects within the corporate plan themes that relate in some way to climate, biodiversity and nature. Please tell us which theme you are referring to and the project reference in your comments.

This question provided an opportunity for comments to be made.

1 response was received in relation to this question. It suggested that the CEAC would have a role in most/all parts of the corporate plan but, nevertheless, highlighted its crucial importance in the development of new policies and engaging with the local community and other partners.

Q8. If you have any general comments about the role of CEAC in relation to the Corporate Plan please use the space below to tell us

No comments were received to this question.

Your 3 things...

Q9. What do you consider to be the 3 main achievements of the committee?

In this question respondents were asked to list 3 main achievements of the CEAC.

This question was answered by 2 out of 4 survey respondents. More specifically, 1 respondent indicated 3 main achievements, whilst the other 1 only indicated 2 achievements.

Among the answers provided, the achievements that were mentioned the most were ‘engaging with external stakeholders’ and ‘raising the profile of CEAC’, both mentioned twice.

The other achievement that was mentioned is ‘the Action Plan’, which appeared in 1 response.

Q10. What are the top 3 things that you think worked well?

This question asked respondents to list the top 3 things that in their opinion worked well.

This question was answered by 2 out of 4 respondents. Of them, 1 listed 2 things that worked well, whilst the other 1 only provided 1 answer.

Among the answers provided, the thing that respondents mentioned the most was ‘providing feedback to Cabinet’, which was mentioned twice.

The remaining response mentioned ‘promoting climate change work in the community’ as something that worked well.

Q11. What 3 things do you think could be improved?

This question asked respondents to list 3 things that in their opinion could be improved.

This question was answered by 2 out of 4 respondents. Of them, 1 indicated 2 things that worked well, whilst the other respondent only provided 1 answer.

Among the answers provided, the thing that Cabinet members mentioned the most was ‘more involvement of CEAC’ in Cabinet’s work.

The other 2 responses mentioned ‘promoting climate change work’ and ‘better understanding of CEAC and Cabinet’s remit’.

Anything else?

Q12. Do you have any other comments about CEAC that you would like us to consider as part of this review?

Respondents were asked if they have any other comments about CEAC that they would like to be considered as part of this review. 3 responses were received in relation to this question – they were all (more or less) supportive of the work of the CEAC.

The importance of the committee’s input into policy and decision-making through recommendations, advice and scrutiny was praised. It was, nevertheless, suggested by 1 contributor that as the climate change agenda became more advanced there should be a change of emphasis for the CEAC in actually helping to advance forward projects.

A concern was, however, expressed about the lines of communication between the CEAC and the Cabinet. It was mentioned by 1 respondent that they had more of a general vibe of what the committee was doing rather than any specifics.

HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

Once the survey has closed an initial report collating all the responses will be prepared for the review group to enable them to identify options and proposals for any changes. These will be considered at the next meeting of the CEAC scheduled for Monday 19 April 2021.

This review is being led by Cllrs David Grant, Catherine Webber and Debby Hallett and supported by officers Suzanne Malcolm, Michelle Wells and Andy Egan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the consultation or the results presented in this report, please contact:

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END