

Minutes of a meeting of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



held on Monday, 7 September 2020 at 6.00 pm

This was a virtual meeting

View the recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Eric Batts, Eric De La Harpe, Hayleigh Gascoigne, David Grant (Chair), Alison Jenner, Bob Johnston.

Officers: Andrew Lane, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders and Michelle Wells

18. Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the committee. There had been a change to the membership of the committee. Chair thanked Councillor Max Thompson for his service and input to the committee. Councillor Bob Johnston was welcomed to the committee as a new member, replacing Councillor Max Thompson.

There were a few items from the one-year work programme to update the committee on:
A Greentech report is due in December.

Opportunities for off-site solar energy are being investigated.

The role of Climate Change Lead officer is advertised now for people to apply.

There is a Local Government Association (LGA) webinar on scrutinising climate change, on 18th September. The council is a member of LGA so it is free for councillors to sign up.

19. Apologies for absence

Apologies were given from Councillor Amos Duveen.

20. Declarations of interest

Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne declared an interest in item 7 of the agenda, as she is an investor in the Low Carbon Hub. She would not take part in this discussion.

21. Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

22. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 01 July 2020 were declared a correct record. The Chair will sign them as such.

23. Public participation

There was no public participation.

24. Power Purchase Agreement

Corporate energy officer Heather Saunders introduced the report to the committee.

The paper is for the committee's consideration. A Power Purchase Agreement, or PPA, could be an element, along with a broad portfolio of projects, to help achieve the council's carbon neutral target.

The first priority, from our climate emergency one-year work programme, is that we will aim to reduce energy use from our operations, and to install renewable technologies on site. These actions alone are unlikely to bring our carbon emissions to zero, so further options need to be considered. A PPA is a mechanism for matching zero carbon electricity generation at a new renewable energy asset with the council's energy use. It then allows us to declare zero carbon emissions for the contracted energy. If a new renewable energy asset is in South Oxfordshire, this also has additional local benefits. We therefore wish to enter into discussions with other Oxfordshire Councils and other external parties to identify the opportunities available.

As written in the report, there will be a range of financial and procurement issues to resolve, so no commitment has been made yet.

There is no conflict between these proposals and the parallel process of procuring gas and electricity for the council's properties.

We realise this is a complex proposal, and we have set out the key issues in the paper, and we welcome questions.

Councillors commented on the following:

- The difficulty of being truly green.
- Sleeving was discussed, we need to find out if the costs are viable. Sleeving has to happen as there has to be a third party for balancing, the energy can't just come from the generator.
- It was asked if battery storage could be counted towards this. The officer confirmed that this report is not about investing, the report is about enabling our emissions to be carbon neutral by contracting with an asset that hasn't allocated its emissions to another party.
- How are discussions with other parties going? Are Parish councils included? Officer confirmed there has been one meeting so far with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). It will be reported back to the Chair when it is confirmed that discussions have been had with Chief Financial Officers.
- What is the benefit of having a local supplier? Officer confirmed we have Oxfordshire targets, so a local supplier benefits that, and the local economy. It was confirmed that if contracting with a wind farm further away, we could still benefit from the certification, but we will look at local options first. Locally sourced assets reduce transmission losses.
- Point 24 in the report – regarding 70% of council's energy demand is from leisure centres. Our contractor pays the energy bills for leisure centres. We include leisure centres in our emissions. Our demand is currently small. If we can add the leisure demand, we can have a more complex arrangement with investment and a PPA in the same project. Investment takes several years, but right now we aren't responsible for leisure centre energy bills.
- Who are the other organisations/commercial partners to be involved? Officer responded this is other organisations who are part of the PPA.

The committee agree with the recommendation that PPA should be explored, with added wording to include larger parish councils and town councils.

25. England's Economic Heartland - transport strategy consultation

Andrew Lane from Planning Policy gave an introduction to the consultation of the draft transport strategy.

England's Economic Heartland is a partnership of local transport authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

The consultation covers the Draft Transport Strategy, the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, and the Proposal to Establish a Statutory Sub-national Transport Body. The end date for the consultation is 6 October 2020.

The website (link provided in the agenda) is very helpful and the final strategy is planned for the beginning of 2021.

Cabinet member sign off is the expected process for the response from the council.

The strategy's draft vision is "to realise sustainable growth opportunities and improve quality of life and wellbeing for Heartland residents and businesses, by harnessing the region's globally renowned centres of innovation to unlock a world class, de-carbonised transport system".

Draft key principles are:

- The strategy touches on the impact of Covid-19 and how we can do things differently in the future.
- Achieving net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2050.
- Accessibility and inclusivity – improve quality of life to all.
- Support the regional economy by connecting people and businesses to markets and opportunities.
- Ensuring the Heartland works for the UK by enabling the efficient movement of people and goods.

The consultation is asking for comment on the vision, key principles, having a step-change approach, 30 policies over 4 themes, and implementation and delivery pipelines supported by the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal.

There is no specific mention of the Ox-Cam Expressway. Policy 12 mentions the ARC with travel from Oxford to Milton Keynes is mentioned as a strategic issue to resolve.

The proposal to establish a Statutory Sub-national Transport Body – views are sought on whether to become statutory (currently operates as non-statutory). This would give more powers to create policy and be consulted on rail franchises, road infrastructure strategy and procuring bus services.

The Chair welcomed comments and questions and split the discussion into two parts. First, to comment on the strategy:

- Seems very high level – not much to object to.
- Welcomed the recognition of home working
- East -West Rail - not hard enough on that. Need to consider that franchises are no longer.
- Integration of bus and rail – need more on this. E.g Tyneside integrated metro and buses was popular.
- OCC are developing LTP5 – Local Transport Plan – need to integrate this strategy with County plans
- Ox-Cam ARC and EEH – how will these two bodies work together – want more on this. Not clear on this.
- The strategy would benefit from clarity on the relationship with planning at the district level.
- Councillor Gascoigne asked why parking lorries was flagged – Officer added that freight is an important element of movement and economy in the region. Councillor

- Johnston added that the British Road Federation is putting on pressure to provide more lorry parks.
- Chair mentioned that pages 22-23 lists areas, and some local areas/towns are not listed – Abingdon, Wantage, Faringdon – can these be listed in a category, so that no area appears to be missed out.
 - Rural connectivity – needs to be given more importance. Neighbouring villages to market towns – there aren't easy active transport links to Didcot transport hub – people have to use their cars – Councillor Gascoigne asked for more emphasis on this in the strategy.
 - Chair mentioned the strategy's carbon neutral targets for transport. This council has targets that are sooner than 2050, and midway points should be added to the strategy targets. We'd be happy to bring the target date forward in line with our local targets.
 - Make life easier to travel on public transport – one ticket. This will encourage the public.

Item 2 is for the proposal to have a statutory body.

- List of powers seem reasonable – powers brought locally.
- Governance structure is not overly clear. Democratic accountability is going to be important and needs to be maintained throughout.

The Chair listed the areas the committee thought the council should respond on:

- Electrify East-West Rail as far as possible. Councillor Johnston is happy to provide details.
- Integrate rail and bus is important – as is connectivity with villages/rural communities and transport hubs.
- Clarity on the Ox-Cam Arc and how this will work with this body. There needs to be coordination with local planning. More guidance needed in the strategy on what planning powers local districts have. What are the links between district planning authorities and the statutory body?
- List all market towns to show they are considered in the strategy.
- Support the sub-national body becoming statutory as long as democratic accountability and an appropriate governance structure is in place.

The committee voted in favour of these recommendations to feed into the consultation response of the council, which is expected to be signed off by the relevant Cabinet members.

26. Updates from the Task and Finish groups

Councillor Gascoigne informed the committee that two task and finish groups had been held, to brainstorm and talk in detail. No decisions are made at these meetings.

The topics were:

1. The design guide: This was a chance to learn from planning officers. It is a guide for those putting in permissions – what does the council want to see in terms of building materials, look, energy efficiency etc. There is an update planned for the current version, therefore a chance for the councillors to feed into it. Planned to be a joint South and Vale district council document.
2. Biodiversity: There is a policy in place – we need to have a net gain in biodiversity when developing land. Onsite is better than offsetting. There will be a tree planting guide. The group learned more about the nature recovery strategy. Councillor De La Harpe asked if the presentation could be made public as it was very interesting.

27. Any other business

There was not AOB.
The meeting was closed at 18:58pm.

The meeting closed at 6.58 pm