

Agenda



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Date: 9 April 2021
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A meeting of the **Climate Emergency Advisory Committee**

will be held on Monday, 19 April 2021 at 6.00 pm

This will be a virtual, online meeting.

Watch the meeting live here:

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

Members of the Committee:

Councillors

David Grant (Chair),
Amos Duveen (Vice Chair)
Eric Batts
Eric De La Harpe
Hayleigh Gascoigne
Alison Jenner
Bob Johnston

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'M Reed'.

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

1. Chair's announcements

To receive any announcements from the chair and general housekeeping matters.

2. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence and the attendance of substitute members.

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent.

5. Minutes of the last meeting

(Pages 4 - 8)

To review the minutes of the meeting on 14 December 2020, and if agreed as a correct record, for the chair to sign them as such.

6. Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

7. CEAC review

(Pages 9 - 36)

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. Make any recommendations to Cabinet.

Introduced by Councillor David Grant
Officer – Michelle Wells

8. CEAC Climate Action and Biodiversity Work Programme 2021/22

(Pages 37 - 50)

For committee to note the contents of the report and progress of the work programme, and to make any recommendations to Cabinet.

Introduced by Councillors Catherine Webber and Debby Hallett.
Officer – Michelle Wells

9. Climate Action Plan Development

(Pages 51 - 59)

For the committee to review the proposed development process for The Vale of White Horse Climate Action Plan 2021-24 and internal governance structure to support development and implementation once the plan is approved.

CEAC to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding the proposed developed process for the Climate Action Plan.

Introduced by Councillors Catherine Webber and Debby Hallett
Officer – Andy Egan

10. Biodiversity Action Working Group

(Pages 60 - 65)

For Committee to note the report on the establishment of a joint South and Vale member and officer Biodiversity Working Group to assist the Council in scoping Corporate Plan 2020-24 biodiversity projects to tackle the climate emergency. To make recommendations to Cabinet.

Introduced by Councillor David Grant
Officer – Andy Egan

11. DEFRA Consultation on environmental principles

For the committee to review the consultation documents at the following link:
DEFRA [Consultation launched on environmental principles](#)

For the committee to appoint a task and finish group for this workstream.

Introduced by Councillor David Grant

12. NPPF Task and Finish Group

Councillor David Grant will update the committee on the NPPF Task and Finish Group.

Minutes

of a meeting of the



Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

(CEAC)

held on Monday, 14 December 2020 at 6.00 pm

This was a virtual meeting

Watch the recording here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_q_P7Ewtzpq

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 Bob Johnston.

Officers: Andy Egan, Dominic Lamb, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders and Michelle Wells.

Also present: Cabinet Members - Councillors Debby Hallett and Catherine Webber.

Chair's announcements

Chair welcomed everyone to the last CEAC meeting of the year. He also mentioned that Cabinet member, Councillor Debby Hallett, was in attendance to discuss the design guide. Also, the new Cabinet member for environment and climate emergency, and for CEAC, Councillor Catherine Webber, was in attendance.

The new Climate Action Lead, Andy Egan, was also present at this meeting, and we are expecting an additional officer to join us in January 2021.

29. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

30. Declarations of interest

Councillor Gascoigne declared her interest in Low Carbon Hub, but this would not have any impact on the agenda items.

31. Urgent business

None.

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 7 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the chair as such.

33. Public participation

None.

34. One-year work programme progress update, alignment to Corporate Plan and future planning

Councillor Webber briefed the committee on the progress update. There was a meeting held on 19 November with Councillor Webber, Acting Deputy Chief Executive for Place, Councillor Grant and Insight and Policy Manager, to review the CEAC one-year programme.

A timeline of activity was reviewed, and a review of the list of agenda items raised in the CEAC meetings held so far.

The group that met discussed how the new corporate plan will guide the council's work, and how a future climate change strategy could sit under the corporate plan, to set up future projects. This will be created early next year with CEAC input in an advisory capacity, and with Cabinet ownership.

The climate emergency theme in the corporate plan will plan one, two and three year projects. We were supported by a clear plan in the corporate plan for carbon reduction in council buildings and biodiversity.

Councillor Webber said that she looked forward to working with the committee.

The meeting also involved reviewing the original year one work programme. There had been good progress despite Covid-19. The carbon emissions baseline work completed was important. Some delayed items would come forward with new corporate projects. Councillor Webber thanked the committee and the Insight and Policy Manager for her hard work over the last year.

It was clarified that the documents attached to this agenda item in the meeting pack was misplaced and belonged with the agenda item on Greentech. This was a verbal update.

Officer responded to a question about the recruitment. There was a six-month contract for another Climate Action Officer, to join Andy Egan, to support externally funded projects.

Committee noted the verbal update.

35. Task and Finish group update

Chair updated the committee. The task and finish group met with Bioregional – One Planet Living Oxfordshire (OPLO)

Committee members had a productive session. There are lots of different strands:

One Planet Living Oxfordshire

Circular Economy

Growth board strategic vision

Cross county collaboration group has a statement of intent.

The aim was to tie these together in a meaningful way. Bioregional will be conducting a gap analysis in relation to the climate emergency year one work programme and corporate plan.

Committee noted the task and finish update.

36. Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy update

The Climate Action Lead briefed the committee on the update report on the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS).

Councillor Webber was a political member on the steering group – the group was yet to meet and give views on the strategy. Officers from the Oxfordshire Councils had worked on it so far. The timeline intention was to achieve Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Cabinet sign off on 23 February. The strategy should be presented to district council Cabinet before or after 23 February. The strategy contains detailed policies, numbering around 40.

The Climate Action Lead drew attention to;

Point 13 in the presented paper – this was a listed set of policies grouped under different areas.

They were all in draft form, so not in the public domain yet. The political steering group were yet to meet – postponed due to staff absence at OCC. They hoped to meet in early 2021.

There had been extensive officer contributions – coordination with planning officers and the Climate Action Lead officer.

The park and charge project will be the first practical manifestation of the strategy, installation of charge points was due in 2021.

This was a partnership strategy and implementation.

Under point 4 of the background section – UK central government had brought forward the ambitions regarding electric cars to 2030. This urgency will strengthen local ambitions.

There was a query regarding power supply – in historic areas, the electricity supply is not adequate for electric vehicle charging and would need boosting. Officer confirmed that this point was addressed in detail, and the impact on local electricity grids will be addressed before installation.

The chart on item four – it was noted by committee that data points stop in 2018. Do we have access to more recent data?

It was replied that there was national data in October 2020, and the Climate Lead Officer had made a summary sheet that could be made available to CEAC.

Chair added a view that the infrastructure was lagging and people need to be able to charge on the street, or car parks will be overly full.

It was asked if there were government grants available to support this work. Officers replied that the park and charge project was supported through grant schemes that Oxfordshire councils accessed together.

There had been private sector funding – park and charge operators and SSE - Partnership working and funding.

It was confirmed that there was currently no information on income from park and charge.

At the officer board for the park and charge project, it was discussed that there was an initial period of no income. Firstly, there would be return on investment from private investors. There was potential to renegotiate conditions at a later date.

Committee noted the update.

37. HM Government's 10-point green plan

The Insight and Policy Manager updated the committee on the implementation of the ten-point plan. The energy white paper was released – detailing steps over the next decade, and it pointed to further funding to come. In the run up to the climate summit, important policy announcements are expected. The summary of the plan presented today was for the CEAC to note.

Committee asked how we could use this to inform our policy making to improve planning applications and to strengthen the need for greener warmer houses from the start. It was suggested that this could be discussed at agenda item 12, on the joint design guide.

Chair added that the ban on installation of gas boilers was dropped quickly, which was disappointing.

It was explained that the tranches of funding did support our work locally, and policy announcements may lead to funding – we should be ready to deliver.

The committee discussed plans for greener homes and public buildings – will it be sufficient. Officers informed the committee that initial work to decide if plans were sufficient had been conducted – the Corporate Energy Officer reviewed this and concluded that generally it was not sufficient. There was acknowledgement in the ten-point plan that there would be more funding. We needed to attract private funding too, to match public sector. The ten-point plan suggested this could be 11 billion pounds. Corporate Energy Officer confirmed that officers can research the requirement further.

Committee noted the update on the 10-point plan.

38. Greentech - Supporting the low carbon economy in the Vale

The Insight and Policy Manager updated the committee.

The Greentech membership briefing – working with Oxfordshire Greentech, through the economic development team

Committee were asked to note the year one support package.

Committee asked how many organisations are in Oxfordshire Greentech. Insight and Policy Manager informed the committee that the Economic Development Team would have further details, but unfortunately were unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Page 33 – resource implications, at point 20 – was there any details on the business recovery survey?

Acting Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the full report was circulated in November in councillor updates – the link can be recirculated to the CEAC.

Committee noted the Greentech update.,

39. Joint Design Guide - update report

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Debby Hallett, updated the committee on the progress of the Joint Design Guide (South and Vale).

The report was for internal use, as it was a working draft. The urban design team was working on this, and they will work upon the two existing guides, to improve and reflect new corporate priorities.

It will be a supplementary planning document (SPD)- SPD's provide more detail, they were not part of Local Plan, but were material considerations in determining planning applications. The intention was to assist in the process of developing high quality development. The emphasis will be on improving quality of life.

This was a key opportunity to shape the guide before external consultation. The CEAC had been emailed the draft guide and was invited to submit comments by the 15 January deadline. This had been emailed to the committee. Councillor Hallett stated that the priority section for CEAC input was on pages 9-24, section three.

There will be workshops, dates to be confirmed. There will be a joint project board to discuss chapters. It was hoped that adoption would take place in one year's time.

The section called climate adaptation - the title was discussed, and the committee were invited to suggest a more suitable title. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment, rather than adapting to current problems.

The CEAC would have opportunity to feed into this to help develop the climate adaptation section. More in-depth comments and ideas can be emailed to planning officers Marta Bou Fernandez and Jake Bassett.

The final draft was expected by May 2021.

Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Webber, had been invited onto the project board – and would be a direct link to CEAC. The CEAC will be involved throughout.

A view was expressed that County was pressing ahead with low traffic neighbourhoods, with one mode of transport to access such neighbourhoods. The Design Guide could conflict with this - may need to reword the relevant section in the Design Guide. Officers would consider this.

Councillor Hallett pointed out that the South guide previously was written by officers and won awards. The Vale one was written by consultants. The new joint guide will be worked on by officers only.

Chair commented that the climate adaptation section had placeholders for ideas, but we needed to link back to the Local Plan. Was there scope in the Design Guide to put detail on what was meant by sustainable. Can we link to the central government ten-point plan also?

Committee noted the update and the deadline for comment on the Joint Design Guide.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm

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



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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:

Consultation and Community Engagement Team
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
01235 422125
haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk

To enquire about the council's work on Climate Change please contact the Insight and Policy team:

Michelle Wells
Insight and Policy Manager
Michelle.wells@southandvale.gov.uk

END

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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Cabinet member responsible: Cllr. Debby Hallett

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To: Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

DATE: 19 April 2021

AGENDA ITEM

Climate Action and Biodiversity 2021/22 Work Programme

Recommendation(s)

(a) Committee to note the progress and process to date, including the activity commissioned within the 2020/21 budget, in respect of providing a strategic response to the Council's climate emergency declaration and adopted carbon neutral targets for the Council and the District.

(b) Committee to review the proposed 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programmes, in respect of providing a strategic response to the Corporate Plan 2020-24, which will provide a base for the Vale of White Horse District Council Climate Action Plan and proposed Biodiversity Action Plan.

(c) Committee to approve the submission of the proposed 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programmes to Cabinet.

(d) Committee to recommend to Cabinet that the proposed quarterly Corporate Plan 2020-24 performance reports are brought forward to the CEAC, in order for them to check, challenge and provide advice on project progress to Cabinet, against the projects included in this work programme for 2021/22.

Purpose of Report

1. This report outlines a proposed programme in 2021/22 that the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) could recommend to Cabinet as a strategic response to the Corporate Plan together with the climate emergency declaration and adopted carbon neutral targets for the council and the district.

2. The items put forward for inclusion in the 2021/22 work programme have been defined by the Corporate Plan projects that have been agreed by Council members for delivery in 21/22. They are complemented by projects from the 2020/21 CEAC Year One Work Programme that have been carried forward (principally due to the delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic). This report also outlines the climate and biodiversity items considered business as usual for council officers. It further indicates new proposed areas of work so reflects the totality of action that the Council is taking in respect of the climate and ecological emergencies
3. Officers have categorised the work programme into four key headings: foundational projects, council projects, district projects and county-wide partnerships and projects.
4. With the new priority accorded to protecting and restoring the natural world in the Corporate Plan there are distinct work programmes presented for Biodiversity and Climate Action respectively.
5. The report indicates those projects which we are currently able to take forward within allocated budgets (in colour) and those which require further scoping and funding (greyed out).

Strategic Objectives

6. This work is supported by both the Council's carbon neutral targets and the new Vale Corporate Plan 2020-24 vision: *"to help build and support thriving local communities, where everyone can enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, within the ecological constraints of our physical environment. We will ensure that our council and our district play their part in tackling the Climate Emergency"*.

Background

7. A climate emergency was declared by Vale of White Horse District Council administration at Full Council in February 2019. The motion outlined the intention for the council to consider adopting an early carbon neutral target.
8. To support a response to the climate emergency, the council established the committee to develop and recommend mitigating actions and advise Cabinet on matters relating to climate change.
9. The Year One Work Programme for 2020/21 was recommended by the committee and approved by Cabinet in January 2020. Despite the restrictions occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic considerable progress has been made in delivering the programme.
10. Much of the work completed has been foundational and will provide the basis on which the council can determine the priority actions to take in order to progress towards the achievement of the carbon neutral targets. Baselines have been completed for both the Council and the district and the next step of modelling different scenarios for how the targets may be achieved is due to be completed and presented to all Councillors and SMT in May 2021. These scenarios will be key to the development of a Climate Action Strategy and Plan and specifically a Carbon Management Plan that will define the pathway to becoming carbon neutral.

Annual Summary 2020/21

Given the prominence of the Climate Emergency in the Corporate Plan 2020-24 a decision was made to appoint a Cabinet member with a specific portfolio for Climate and Environment.

While the Covid-19 pandemic created many challenges in 2020/21 that impacted the delivery of the Year One Work Programme, there were also some positive outcomes, including a reduction in the Council’s carbon emissions. The table below shows the key operational areas in which emissions reductions were made in the first three quarters.

Vale of White Horse CO ₂ emissions (tonnes) Quarter 1 to Quarter 3				
	2019/20	2020/21	Change on 2019/20	% change on 2019/20
Leisure Centres	1,125	450	-675	-60.00%
Council Offices	67	50	-17	-25.37%
Beacon	45	28	-17	-37.78%
Staff Mileage	24	11	-13	-54.17%
Total	1261	539	-722	-57.26%

The Leisure Centre reductions can be attributed exclusive to closures due to Covid-19 related closures and restricted access. Sustained reductions will only be achieved through the implementation of decarbonisation projects.

For office and staff related emissions there is an opportunity to consolidate some of the emissions reductions into longer term adjustments to working arrangements.

The key activities that have been completed or progressed in 2020/21 from the Year One Work Programme are:

- Baseline carbon emissions data reports for district compiled by Aether and presented to Councillors.
- Distinct climate and nature themes embedded in the new Corporate Plan 2020-24 with climate action and sustainability integrated throughout the plan. Significant input from the CEAC into the development of the plan.
- Recruitment of two Climate Action leads (from Nov 2020 and Jan 2021)
- Five CEAC meetings held
- Task & Finish groups covering: Year One Work Programme prioritisation, scoping and development, staff conference design, joint design guide and biodiversity.
- Membership of Oxfordshire Greentech
- Climate and ecological implications added to formal democratic report templates. Each decision and report will now be presented with detail on the

climate and ecological implications so that members are fully cognisant of the impact of any formal decisions.

- Commissioning Anthesis to conduct a district climate action scenario modelling report and Town and Parish Council mapping.
- Securing grant of £361,746 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for Faringdon Leisure Centre to replace gas boiler with air source heat pumps and install solar PV.
- Completion of the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS) 2020-25.
- CEAC review held to assess the Committee’s effectiveness to date and to identify recommendations for improving effectiveness and alignment to the corporate plan going forward.

Prioritisation for 2021/22

11. The priority items have been drawn from the new Corporate Plan. Some of these projects were included in the budget approved by Council in February (in colour) and some are subject to future discretionary growth (greyed out). Should the opportunity arise during the year to consider funding further corporate plan activities, these could be brought forward for consideration as supplementary estimates.
12. This has been complemented by a review of the Year One Work programme and identification of projects which need to be carried forward, including some which have been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some projects have been deprioritised due to the changing work patterns with staff predominantly working from home.
13. This process has involved review and scoping meetings with the CEAC Chair, and the Cabinet Lead for Climate and Environment and officers from Insight & Policy.
14. The focus for 2021/22 is to move from policy development into the delivery phase and make progress towards achieving the carbon neutral targets for the Council’s own operations. This will be reinforced with the development of a three-year Climate Action Plan for 2021-2024.

Corporate Plan Climate Action Items

15. The greyed-out items in the table below have not been included in the Council budget for 2021/22 as approved by Full Council in February 2021. The Lead column identifies the SMT member responsible for ensuring delivery together with the Insight & Policy team member advising on delivery.

NEW CORPORATE PLAN CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS				
Project		Description	Lead	Notes
PHPN1.3	Sustainable Housing	Explore how the council can provide low-cost sustainable housing. Include working with developers, registered providers, community trusts, as well as new partnerships. Include	Suzanne Malcolm;	

		council owned housing. Include a definition of affordability relative to ability to pay, not to market value, and social rent definitions		
PHPN1.7	Garden Communities	Use Garden Villages and Towns designation as a mechanism to introduce innovative housing to meet our needs for high quality, low energy, zero-carbon homes	Suzanne Malcolm;	
PHPN2.1	Sustainable Policies for Homes	Adopt a policy framework that ensures those homes could be delivered in a way that supports the environment and people living healthy lives	Suzanne Malcolm;	
PHPN2.3	CIL strategy	Update the CIL spending strategy and associated procedures to accelerate the delivery of local infrastructural improvements for our communities both in line with our corporate objectives and, where appropriate, to support current spending on existing infrastructure	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	
PHPN2.4	Low-carbon Construction	Consider ways we can encourage lower-carbon construction in Vale	Suzanne Malcolm	Base budget
PHPN2.10	Active Travel Network	Work with partners to produce an Active Travel Network map of current and required coverage across the Vale to include commercial and community buses, cycle paths and storage facilities, pavements and footpaths, green and blue infrastructure, and local taxi firms. Encourage systems that increase use of the Active Travel Network	Suzanne Malcolm	
TCE1.1	Climate Emergency Strategy	Develop a Climate Emergency Strategy for the Council, setting out how we will reach Zero Carbon for all Vale assets by 2030. Identify energy saving opportunities in council-owned buildings and fleets	Suzanne Malcolm; Climate Action Team	Base budget Will be included in the Climate Action Plan
TCE1.2	Year One Climate Action Plan	Complete the CEAC Year One Climate Action Plan and plan for future years	Suzanne Malcolm; Climate Action Team	Base budget
TCE2.5	Climate Emergency Plan	Develop a year two plan with CEAC for meeting our Climate Emergency goals	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	Base budget
TCE3.1	CEAC Year One Action Plan	Complete the CEAC Year One Action Plan and plan for future years	Suzanne Malcolm Michelle Wells	Base budget
COUNCIL PROJECTS				

TCE3.2	Waste Reduction Scheme	Work with partners to define a waste reduction scheme: including ways to reduce bulky waste headed to landfill and reduce recycling contamination	Liz Hayden; Elizabeth Kingdom	
TCE3.5	EV Charging	Work with partners to provide electric charging points in Vale car parks and at our buildings, and increase charging infrastructure across Oxfordshire	Liz Hayden; Andy Egan	
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
TCE2.1	Carbon Reduction	Complete those tasks in Year one Climate Action Plan that have to do with reducing carbon in the wider district	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	Base budget
TCE2.2	Zero Carbon Construction Policies	Introduce policies for zero carbon construction requirements	Suzanne Malcolm;	
TCE2.3	Local Plan	Introduce sustainable growth and environmental policies to our Local Plan	Suzanne Malcolm;	
TCE2.4	Local Plan policies for carbon zero building	Ensure our Local Plan contains polices to make new buildings carbon zero to build and to live/work in	Suzanne Malcolm;	
TCE2.6	Air Quality Measure	Improve how we measure air quality. Explore particulate measurement in our sensitive areas. Explore ways to publish AQ measurements in live time, so people can make decisions on whether it's healthy outside for them today	Liz Hayden;	Base budget
TCE2.7	Air Quality Action Plan	Update the Air Quality Action Plans for our AQMAs	Liz Hayden;	
TCE3.8	Retrofit	Work with local partners and Government on funding, policies and programmes to encourage retrofitting houses with sustainable energy schemes, and to help residents to take advantage of schemes that support this work	Liz Hayden; Elizabeth Kingdom	
TCE3.6	Oxford-Cambridge Arc	Take an active role in the Oxford-Cambridge arc to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies	Suzanne Malcolm; Michelle Wells; Andy Egan	
TCE3.7	Growth Deal	Take an active role in the Growth Deal and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies	Michelle Wells Andy Egan	Base budget
BHC1.4	Active Travel	Work with partners to promote Active Travel and to support the development of Local	Suzanne Malcolm;	

		Cycling and Walking Infrastructure, helping to shape new developments that link homes to work, recreation and social spaces within communities		
BHC1.6	Air Quality Management Plan	Update the Air Quality Management Action Plans for the Vale's air pollution hotspots; Work with Oxfordshire County Council to improve how we measure and report air pollution and how we will work with schools and community groups to raise awareness of our clean air campaigns	Liz Hayden;	
BSF2.1	Ethical Procurement Policy	Develop a comprehensive and ethical Procurement Policy that reflects our corporate goals and aims		Base budget
WIP2.5	Community grants and lottery	Refresh our community grants scheme and introduce a Community Lottery to raise funds for groups to develop in line with our corporate objectives	Elizabeth Kingdom	Base budget
WIOI3.2		Council reporting and decision-making templates to include impact on the climate emergency	Adrianna Partridge Elizabeth Kingdom	Base budget

New Priority Climate Action Items

16. In addition to the Corporate Plan projects a number of other projects have been identified as priorities to take forward over the coming year. These are being delivered within current staffing resources.

NEW PRIORITY CLIMATE ACTION ITEMS				
Project	Action	Lead	Notes	
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS				
	Climate Action Plan 2021-24	Develop a three-year Climate Action Plan including the establishment of internal governance and engagement structures. This will be supported by a Communications and Engagement Plan.	Suzanne Malcolm; James Carpenter Andy Egan; Elizabeth Kingdom	See separate paper
	Officer training	Implement training for officers on South Oxfordshire' target and work to address the climate emergency	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	eLearning module(s). Investigate options
COUNCIL PROJECTS				
	Low Carbon Council Estate	Prepare site decarbonisation plans for council buildings including heating and renewable energy options appraisals. Compile data in preparation for external funding applications.	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	
COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
	Oxfordshire Growth Board	Advise on Zero Carbon Economy Study and Environmental Advisory Group development	Suzanne Malcolm;	

			Michelle Wells; Andy Egan	
	Ox-Cam Arc	Advise on climate action and environmental principles and seek to ensure the Arc makes a positive contribution to achieving the Council's carbon neutral and nature recovery objectives	Suzanne Malcolm; Michelle Wells; Andy Egan	
	COP26	Participate in the Oxfordshire COP26 Alliance	Michelle Wells; Elizabeth Kingdom	

Climate Action Items Already Commissioned

17. The following projects are either continuing or being carried forward from the previous Year One Work Programme and were budgeted for 2020/21.

CARRY FORWARD AND ONGOING CLIMATE ACTION PROJECTS				
Project	Action	Lead	Notes	
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS				
	Council emissions baseline	Create a 'glidepath' tool that tracks the contribution of delivered and planned projects and external factors towards achieving a carbon neutral council	Suzanne Malcolm Heather Saunders	
	Scenario Modelling	Develop a model to demonstrate the detailed scope and size of actions needed by all stakeholders to achieve a pathway towards a carbon neutral district	Michelle Wells; Andy Egan; Heather Saunders	
	Town Energy Mapping	Provide baseline energy and carbon emissions data and maps for our market towns	Michelle Wells; Elizabeth Kingdom; Heather Saunders	
	Climate Action Briefing	Session for Councillors and staff on the council's Climate Action Plan	Andy Egan; Elizabeth Kingdom	
	Intranet	Internal staff intranet (Jarvis) page on the climate emergency	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	Currently in development
COUNCIL PROJECTS				
	Solar energy	Identify opportunities to invest in solar energy off site and offset the council's own emissions. Research the investment and partnership options available	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	

	Planning Design Guide	Support the development of policies in the Joint South and Vale Design Guide that will contribute towards a carbon neutral district	Adrian Duffield; Heather Saunders	
	Green Travel Plan	Implement a green travel plan for officers and members	Suzanne Malcolm; Elizabeth Kingdom	
	EV fleet	Support teams in preparing a business case for leasing or purchasing electric vehicles for the council's fleet	Suzanne Malcolm; Heather Saunders	
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
	Town Councils Workshops	Work with town councils across the districts and facilitate a workshop to understand theirs and their parishes' local needs in respect of the climate emergency.	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	Town and Parish Council Forum in May 2021
	Grants Programme	Work with the community enablement team to support community led initiatives which address climate change	James Carpenter Elizabeth Kingdom	
	EV Hire Scheme	Initial feasibility study into an electric vehicle hire facility for residents/staff	Adrianna Partridge; Elizabeth Kingdom	
COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
	Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy	Work with partners to increase EV charging infrastructure across Oxfordshire.	Liz Hayden; Andy Egan	
	Park and Charge	Work with partners to provide electric charging points in Council car parks.	Liz Hayden; Andy Egan	External funding secured

Corporate Plan Biodiversity Items

18. The greyed-out items were not included in the Council budget for 2021/22.

CORPORATE PLAN BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS				
Project		Description	Lead	Notes
Theme 2: Tackling the Climate Emergency				
COUNCIL PROJECTS				
TCE1.3	Open Space / Land Use Strategy	Include in Councils Open Space Strategy opportunities to increase biodiversity, increase tree cover, and (other things we want to do on Council's open spaces)		
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
TCE3.3	Tree Planting Strategy	Develop a tree-planting strategy and work with partners to plant more trees across the district	Suzanne Malcolm;	

			Dominic Lamb; Andy Egan	
TCE3.4	Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy	Develop a Biodiversity Net Gain Targeting Strategy and contribute to a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire	Adrian Duffield; Dominic Lamb; Andy Egan	Ongoing project. From Planning budget. Part of the Environment Bill and expected to become a statutory duty for local authorities
TCE2.8	Habitat Bank	Explore setting up a Habitat Bank to deliver biodiversity offsetting requirements and facilitate tree planting	Suzanne Malcolm; Dominic Lamb; Andy Egan	Base budget This will cover the exploration (feasibility) phase only.

New Priority Biodiversity Items

19. In addition to the Corporate Plan projects a number of other projects have been identified as priorities to take forward over the coming year. Some of these are being delivered within current staffing resources. Those that are greyed-out require additional resources and will be subject to future discretionary growth.

NEW PRIORITY BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS				
Project	Description		Lead	Notes
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECTS				
	Biodiversity Steering Group	Set up a South and Vale Biodiversity Steering Group to advise and help shape the delivery of the Councils' Corporate Plan biodiversity, nature protection and nature recovery objectives.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	See separate paper
	Biodiversity Plan	Develop a 10-year biodiversity plan for how the Council will lead on nature protection and recovery.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	
	Tree Policy	Develop a new tree policy and a tree strategy for South and Vale that covers council owned land, private land and community land.	Suzanne Malcolm; Andy Egan	A new tree policy to be developed as the priority
DISTRICT PROJECTS				
	Tree Planting Programme	Establish a district wide tree planting programme	TBC; Andy Egan	Requires new

				capacity and resources
		Develop proposal for at least one Tiny Forest in partnership with Earthwatch	TBC; Andy Egan	Potential to secure CiL funding
COUNTY WIDE POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS				
	Local Nature Partnership	Call for the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Oxfordshire to promote an ambitious nature recovery programme, including tree and meadow planting, rewilding and providing habitats for wildlife including wildlife corridors	Adrian Duffield; Dominic Lamb	Requires ongoing revenue funding. Part of the Environment Bill and expected to become a statutory duty for local authorities.
	Nature Recovery Strategy	Contribution to a county wide strategy to be produced by the Local Nature Partnership (LNP)	Adrian Duffield; Dominic Lamb	Requires a funding contribution from Vale.

Items Considered Business As Usual

20. Climate Action Plan: For the Council to meet the Climate Emergency declaration and Corporate Plan targets, we need a robust strategy and policy framework, that will include a Climate Action Strategy and Plan. This plan will be informed by the Corporate Plan, carbon neutral targets, learning from the year one work programme and critical data from the Council and district baseline data and forthcoming carbon neutral scenario modelling due for completion in May 2021.
21. CEAC support and co-ordination: In order to facilitate the effective running of the CEAC a significant proportion of officer time will be spent liaising with the Chair and CEAC members on agenda and forward plan management and report preparation. This will also be in close liaison with the Cabinet Lead for Climate and Environment projects in the Corporate Plan.
22. Governance: Across the Council we will formalise climate action within our internal governance so that it becomes embedded within business as usual activity. One essential element of this is to establish senior officer engagement in developing and ensuring effective delivery of the Climate Action Plan. This has recently been progressed with the establishment of a Climate Action Steering Group. Other important aspects are procurement and major contract renewal and includes early preparation for the specification of the new leisure facilities and waste management contracts in 2024, ongoing leisure centre maintenance and refurbishment and grounds maintenance. It is important that when other policies are developed or reviewed, they are informed and guided by climate and biodiversity considerations. A policy and strategy guidance document will soon be in place as part of the council's Corporate Delivery Framework. This will provide staff with the tools they need to develop robust fully rounded policy.

23. Engagement: In order to achieve this transformation in the way we do business we need to encourage and support a change in culture so that climate action is embedded at the heart of the organisation. We will engage with staff to ensure that there is a deep understanding of both the climate and ecological emergencies. This will help to build an assured commitment of staff across the organisation. An organisation wide staff and member climate conference will be organised once the Climate Action Plan is approved. This will be followed by staff training in areas such as carbon literacy. We are also proposing to establish a Climate Action Delivery Group of key officers and a network of Green Champions drawn from across the Council staff.
24. Partnership: We will continue to work in partnership to progress our climate action goals. We will collaborate to develop external funding bids in order to deliver agreed targets and commitments. Where appropriate we will adopt a joint South and Vale approach and work with other districts and Oxfordshire County Council, as well as relevant charitable and community organisations. We will actively monitor or participate in projects by trusted partners as resources allow. There may be specific projects that directly contribute to the target that is set which could be funded by the Vale and delivered by outside partners who have an established track record and expertise with the work.
25. Influencing and lobbying: We will continue to seek to positively influence central government policy in relation to the climate and ecological emergencies. We will respond to relevant consultations to make the case for effective central government legislation, policies and funding for local authority climate and nature protection and recovery action.

Climate and ecological implications

26. The implementation of the Council's climate emergency work programme is explicitly designed to achieve positive climate and ecological outcomes. It is understood that embedding consideration of climate and ecological impacts across all Council decision making and project development is an important step towards reducing carbon emissions and making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in the Vale.
27. Sustaining and increasing staffing capacity and project funding to implement projects that will reduce council and district carbon emissions and protect and restore nature will be essential in ensuring that the 2021/22 work programme delivers positive impacts.
28. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Biodiversity Lead role that could provide leadership and co-ordination, given the level of commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the recent declaration of an ecological emergency.

Financial Implications

29. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £2.6 million

less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus).

30. This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.
31. It was noted last year that many items included within the proposed year one programme of work were feasibility studies and it was acknowledged that there would be significant resource implications and additional budget required beyond year one of the programme. This has been reinforced by the agreement of the new Corporate Plan 2020-24. A further key element of the transformation required to embed climate action and nature recovery work across the Council, is that in addition to identifying new resources, existing resources will need to be redirected or reallocated to support commitments in the Corporate Plan 2020-24.
32. The district scenario modelling and Climate Action Plan will inform and help to scope the climate and nature projects that will be tabled for consideration in any future discretionary growth bids, that would be considered as part of a future supplementary estimate.
33. It is equally clear that we cannot as a Council fund and undertake all of the work that is required to achieve the carbon neutral targets for the district. Additional sources of funding and resourcing will be needed in addition to any new budget allocation. This could include government grants, investment by businesses, households, town and parish councils and contributions by environmental charities and community action groups. What we do need to ensure as a Council is that we have the capacity to position ourselves to secure climate action funding made available by central government and other bodies.
34. The Council has allocated funding to employ two Climate Action Lead officers for 12 months until September and December 2021 respectively. This cost has been shared on a 50:50 basis with South Oxfordshire District Council. However, given the breadth and depth of the work programme for 2021-22 and central emphasis of this area in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 consideration should be given to the longer-term management and delivery of projects in this area.

Legal Implications

35. Carbon neutrality itself is not a legal requirement and consequently there is no legal duty for the Council to undertake actions and activities to achieve this.
36. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise in respect of individual projects included within the subsequent work programme as they are scoped, approved by Cabinet and implemented. These will be subject to identification and appropriate action as required.

Risks

37. Climate action is not currently a statutory function for district councils; however local authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) Many of the projects/activities detailed within this report require a funding stream and have resource implications, including implications arising from redirecting current resource from areas across the Council to this agenda if this is the approach the Cabinet decide to take.
38. Moreover, due to the current financial position, it may not be possible to deliver on the full climate and ecological emergency aspirations declared by the Council.
39. The Vale of White Horse District Council is in partnership with the South Oxfordshire District Council and any items implemented in relation to council operations could lead to complexities, due to shared resources and offices at 135 Milton Park.

Conclusion

41. This report describes the process by which projects were identified for the coming year. It further details which projects have been prioritised from the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and included in the budget approved by Council in February 2021. The report further sets out the Corporate Plan projects that may be brought forward in as part of future discretionary growth.
42. The report also sets out the ongoing projects the Council is already involved in to address the climate and ecological emergencies, and detailed items considered business as usual for council officers as well as items which have already been commissioned within the existing 2020/21 budget to support meeting the climate emergency targets.

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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To: Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

DATE: 19 April 2019

Climate Action Plan 2021-24: Development process

Recommendation

(a) That CEAC recommends the proposed developed process for the Climate Action Plan to cabinet.

Purpose of Report

1. To outline the proposed development process for The Vale of White Horse Climate Action Plan 2021-24 and internal governance structure to support development and implementation once the plan is approved.

Strategic Objectives

2. The Council has set a target to become carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030 and to become a carbon neutral district by 2045. As a first step, the council is aiming for a 75 per cent reduction in carbon emissions in its own operations by 2025 and a 75 per cent reduction in carbon emissions in the district by 2030.
3. The new Vale Corporate Plan 2020-24 vision is: *to help build and support thriving local communities, where everyone can enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, within the ecological constraints of our physical environment. We will ensure that our council and our district play their part in tackling the Climate Emergency.*
4. The Corporate Plan has a priority programme for Tackling the Climate Emergency. It includes actions to: *Develop a Climate Emergency Strategy for the Council,*

setting out how we will reach Zero Carbon for all Vale assets by 2030 (TCE 1.1); and to: Develop a year two plan with CEAC for meeting our Climate emergency goals (TCE 2.5).

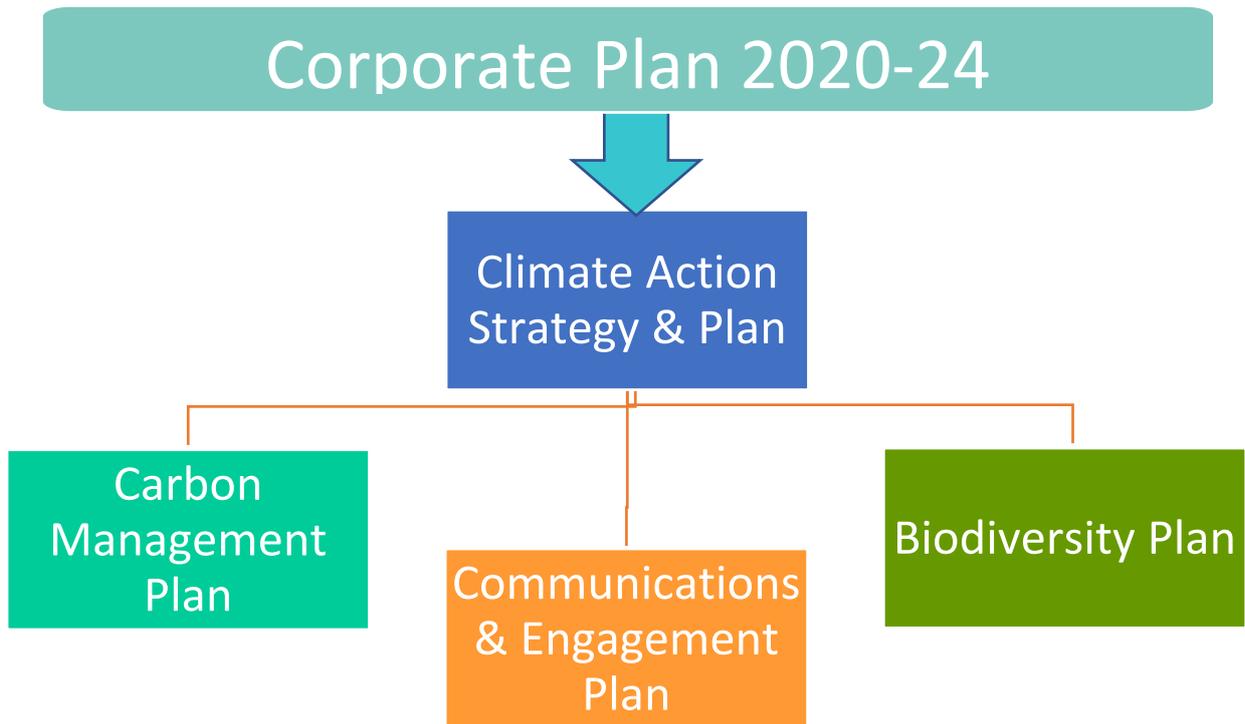
Background

5. The Vale of White Horse district council declared a climate emergency in February 2019. This was followed by the establishment of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee which first met in October 2019. The committee's remit is to advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
6. The year one climate emergency work programme (2020/21) has focussed on foundational work that will enable us to set baselines and model different scenarios that will set out the respective pathways for achieving the carbon neutral targets for the councils and districts. This work is scheduled to be completed in May 2021. A glidepath tool is being developed for charting carbon reductions for the council. An external contractor, Anthesis, is conducting a scenario modelling exercise for district wide carbon reductions, which will be presented to Councillors and SMT on 10 May 2021.
7. In December 2020, the Cabinet lead for Climate and Environment, CEAC Chair and officers completed a review of the year one climate emergency work programme and identified priorities for carrying forward to 2021/22 alongside new projects identified in the Corporate Plan. Each project was also assessed and rated in terms of (i) its carbon/biodiversity impact and (iii) deliverability.
8. As well as feeding into the preparation of the Climate Action Plan, this review and planning work was used to inform the preparation of the 21/22 Work Programme, which brings together Corporate Plan projects agreed in the budgets set by the Councils and other work priorities for Climate Action officers. The 21/22 Work Programme will be presented to the CEAC meeting in April.
9. South Oxfordshire district council is similarly developing a Climate Action Plan and it is recognised that with the shared operational arrangements, there will be a number of shared actions in reducing both council's carbon emissions.

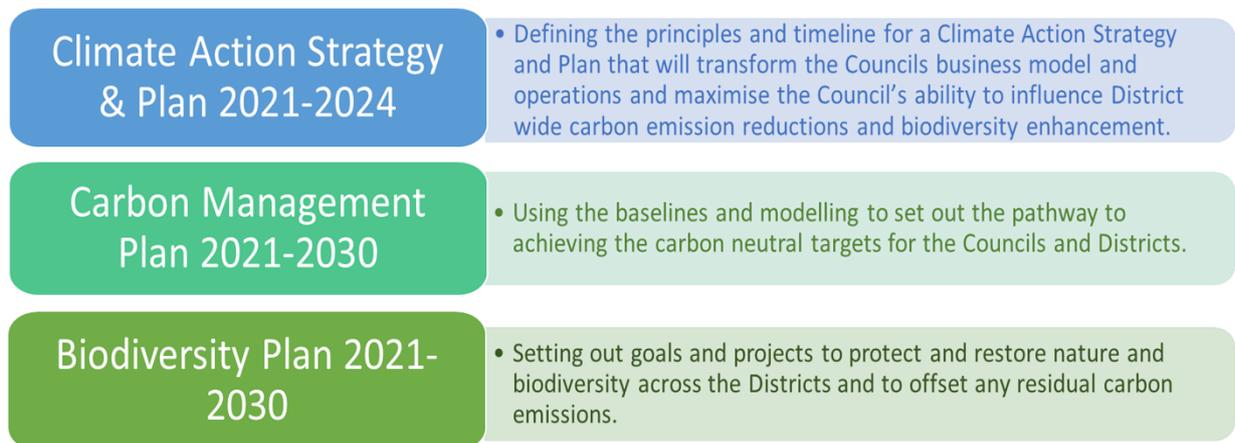
Main subject of report

10. The key purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to set out the pathway and specific actions that the councils will take towards achieving the respective climate emergency targets for the councils and the district.
11. The Climate Action Plan will include alignment, as appropriate, to global, national and county wide policies and strategies. These include the Paris Climate Goals, Climate Change Committee (Sixth Carbon Budget), UK Net Zero Strategy, Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Oxfordshire Growth Board. It will also be aligned at district level to the carbon neutral scenarios produced by Anthesis.
12. The Climate Action Plan will be directly informed by the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and will span the remaining period of the current administrations to 2024. The Climate Action Plan will set out the high-level strategy and priority actions over the three-year period to 2024 and will be supported by two detailed longer-term plans;

a Biodiversity Plan and Carbon Management Plan. This framework will be supported by a Climate Action Communications and Engagement Plan.



13. This framework will create a holistic and joined up approach to addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies.



14. The key elements of the development process are set out in the diagram below:



15. The Climate Action Plans will be developed through a participative and consultative internal and external process. The preparation of the plans will be coordinated by the Insight & Policy and Community Enablement teams. The development team will coordinate the preparation of the Climate Action Plan and stakeholder consultation.

16. Effective and joined-up internal governance will be key to the successful development and implementation of the Climate Action Plans. Further information on the proposed internal governance arrangements are detailed in Appendix 1. A summary of how the different member and office groups will be involved in development and/or implementation of the Climate Action Plans is set out in the table below:

DEVELOPMENT: April - September 2021	ROLE	IMPLEMENTATION: October 2021 - March 2024	ROLE
Cabinet	Approval	Cabinet	Review
Member Reference Group	Oversight		
CEAC	Advice	CEAC	Monitoring
Senior Management Steering Group	Strategic alignment & planning	Senior Management Steering Group	Strategic delivery
		Officer Working\ Group	Operational delivery
		Green Champions	Engagement
Development Team	Insight, coordination, consultation		
Insight & Policy Climate Action Leads	Thematic leadership	Insight & Policy Climate Action Leads	Thematic leadership

17. Informal member reference groups will provide political oversight and guidance in developing the Climate Action Plans. These will be convened by the respective leads for Corporate Services and Transformation. Proposed membership is:

Debby Hallett, Cabinet lead for Corporate Services and Transformation
 Catherine Webber, Cabinet member for climate and environment
 David Grant, Chair, CEAC

18. A new senior management Climate Action Steering Group is being established to give strategic advice on the priority actions, resources and governance arrangements required to ensure effective delivery of the Climate Action Plan.

19. The timeline for developing and approving the Climate Action Plan (CAP) is as follows:

	TASK	OUTPUTS	DELIVERY DATE BY
1	Draft framework and outline content for Climate Action Plans	Officer steering group and reference group agree framework and outline content for Climate Action Plan	26 Mar
2	CAP development document finalised for Vale CEAC meeting	CEAC report	1 April
3	Prepare initial first drafts of CAP, utilising baseline and modelling data together and best practice from other district councils	Feedback from reference group and steering group	30 April
4	Prepare second drafts of CAP with costings	Input from steering group	28 May
5	Internal consultation led by senior officer group	Workshop with the steering group Online staff engagement – webinars, video clips and round table sessions	June 2021
6	Public consultation on key elements of test version of CAP	Workshop event with town and parish councils and separate event for residents to gain feedback on the test version and to share latest updates and next steps.	June 2021
7	Analyse consultation findings and prepare final draft CAP	Final draft CAP considered by Vale CEAC	Aug 2021
8	Make any changes to final drafts recommended by CEAC	CEAC recommended CAPs presented to Cabinet for approval	Sep 2021
9	Prepare growth bids for subsequent budget rounds as appropriate	Councils allocate adequate funding to deliver Climate Action Plan	tbc
10	Prepare a Communications & Engagement Plan	Integration with corporate Comms & Engagement Plans	Oct 2021
11	Design public version of CAP plus summary document	External version published and supported by ongoing comms	Oct 2021
12	Member and officer conference on the CAP	Promote plan. Explain governance. Discuss delivery and monitoring.	Oct 2021

13	Biodiversity Steering Group to develop a 10-year Biodiversity Plan	Plans considered by CEAC and recommended to cabinet for approval	tbc
14	Prepare a 10-year Carbon Management Plan	Plans considered by CEAC and recommended to cabinet for approval	tbc

Climate and ecological impact implications

20. The development and implementation of a Climate Action Plan and supporting framework is explicitly designed to achieve positive climate and ecological outcomes. It is understood that embedding consideration of climate and ecological impacts across all council decision making and project development is an important step towards reducing carbon emissions and making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in the Vale.

Financial Implications

21. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £2.6 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus).

22. This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.

Legal Implications

23. Carbon neutrality itself is not a legal requirement and consequently there is no legal duty for the council to undertake actions and activities to achieve this.

24. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise in respect of individual projects included within the subsequent work programme as they are scoped, approved by Cabinet and implemented. These will be subject to identification and appropriate action as required.

Risks

25. Sustaining and increasing staffing capacity and project funding to implement climate action projects that will reduce council and district carbon emissions and protect and restore nature will be essential in ensuring that the Climate Action Plan can be delivered. There is a risk that the necessary resources and funding will not be made available to deliver the Climate Action Plan.

26. There is a reputational risk to the council if it does not deliver, or make substantial progress towards delivering, on its climate emergency commitments.

Other Implications

27. None

Conclusion

28. The report describes the proposed process for developing a Vale Climate Action Plan 2021-24.

29. That CEAC recommends the proposed development process for the Climate Action Plan to Cabinet.

Background Papers

Appendix 1

Climate Action Plans: internal governance and delivery

Rationale: Both Vale and South councils have declared climate emergencies, have ambitious carbon reduction targets and are developing Climate Action Plans. Climate action is also embedded throughout both corporate plans and therefore we need internal governance structures to ensure accountability, guide projects and strategic objectives, and to deliver the plans.

In terms of governance, Vale council has a Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) which is made up of councillors who advise and provide recommendations to the Cabinet on climate action.

Senior managers meet regularly at SMT meetings to discuss all council programmes of work and the SMT has appointed a strategic lead officer for climate matters, Suzanne Malcolm. In the Gateway 1 report on Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, it suggests the formulation of a project group to support the Climate Emergency Advisory Committees' function to advise Cabinet on matters relating to climate change.

To successfully deliver both council's Climate Action Plans, support and input from senior colleagues, collaboration with operational colleagues, and clear information and guidance to all staff will be needed. Therefore, it is proposed to develop a climate action steering group of senior managers, a working group with operational colleagues and a more informal group of green champions. It will be important for these groups to work in a joined-up way.

The Climate Action steering group will inform the development of the Climate Action Plan. An operational delivery group will be formed to help implement the Plan internally and Green Champions will be appointed to develop ideas and inspire staff engagement on climate action.

Once the Climate Action Plan is approved there will be an all staff briefing on the Plan which will outline the content as well as informing staff on what this means for their

work. Following on from the conference, staff training will be issued, working with HR on developing and implementing this. It is also recommended for the climate action team to attend meetings with different teams across the council to work with the teams on their climate action ideas and how they might integrate it into their work. Having done this with a few teams so far, it has already generated a lot of ideas and interest in climate action, as well as reducing silo working.

An online webinar with Councillors will take place to inform them about the Climate Action Plan, including the targets and content, and then opening up discussions on how councillors can support the plan and how to engage with residents and local organisations on it.

Climate Action Steering Group

Purpose: to advise on the development of the Climate Action Plans and to provide strategic oversight and performance monitoring of the Climate Action Plans and the Corporate Plan climate objectives

Responsibilities:

- Strategic oversight and input of the Climate Action Plans and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Performance monitoring of the Climate Action Plan deliverables and climate objectives in the Corporate Plans
- Sharing information with teams and supporting them to deliver Climate Action Plan projects and programmes
- Support with resource allocation for Climate Action Plan projects and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Make recommendations to CEACs on matters relating to the climate emergency

Meetings: quarterly and to take place before CEAC meetings to discuss relevant actions. After CEAC meetings, the Climate Action Team will share a summary of discussions and key actions to the steering group to keep them informed and aware of urgent actions.

Members:

Name	Role
Suzanne Malcolm, Chair	Acting Deputy Chief Exec - place
Michelle Wells	Insight and Policy Manager
James Carpenter	Interim Head of Corporate Services
<i>Vacant</i>	Head of Development and Regeneration
Liz Hayden	Head of Housing and Environment
Adrian Duffield	Head of Planning
Adrianna Partridge	Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Transformation and Operations

Climate Action Working Group

Purpose: operationalising and delivering on the Climate Action Plans and climate objectives of the Corporate Plans

Responsibilities:

- Operationalising and delivering on Climate Action Plan projects and climate objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Collaborative working with colleagues on Climate Action Plan projects, including providing input and ideas on new and existing projects
- Information sharing on projects with colleagues at meetings and communicating updates to their teams after meetings

Meetings: quarterly, after steering group meetings; task and finish groups or ad hoc working group meetings can be arranged when needed

Members:

Name	Role
Michelle Wells, Chair	Insight and Policy Manager
Andy Egan	Climate Action Lead
Elizabeth Kingdom	Climate Action Lead
Heather Saunders	Corporate Energy Officer
Melanie Smans	Economic Development and Active Communities Manager
Catrin Mathias	Property Manager
Jayne Bolton	Infrastructure and Development Manager
Marybeth Harasz	Didcot Garden Town Manager
Lisa Selby	Waste Team Leader
Lucy Murfett	Planning Policy Manager
Dominic Lamb	Planning Specialist Team Leader
Cynthia Calvert	Private Sector Housing Team Leader
John Backley	Technical Services Manager
Shona Ware	Community Enablement Manager
TBC	Interim Communications Lead Officer

Green Champions

Purpose: an informal group to inspire and engage with interested staff on sustainability and the Climate Action Plans, and to support them to encourage their teams and colleagues to incorporate climate action into their work

Responsibilities:

- Develop ideas and plans to engage colleagues in the climate agenda and the Climate Action Plans
- To be informed on Climate Action Plan updates and opportunities to be involved in relevant projects
- Share climate action information and guidance with their wider teams and networks

Members: Colleagues from any department and level to join at their own interest

Meetings: every 2-3 months, depending on colleague interest and projects

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



Report Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Cllr. Catherine Webber

E-mail: catherine.webber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CEAC

Date: 19 April 2021

Biodiversity Working Group

Recommendation(s)

(a) For Committee to recommend to Cabinet the establishment of a joint South and Vale member and officer Biodiversity Working Group to assist the Council in scoping Corporate Plan 2020-24 biodiversity projects to tackle the climate emergency which are currently subject to future discretionary growth.

Purpose of Report

1. To present the rationale and proposed terms of reference for a Biodiversity Working Group

Corporate Objectives

2. Vale has prioritised nature protection and nature recovery and climate emergency related environmental sustainability in its Corporate Plan 2020-24. Indeed, the plan is based on a vision of all council activity being shaped by the need to operate within ecological boundaries:

Vale of White Horse District Council aims to help build and support thriving local communities, where everyone can enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, within the ecological constraints of our physical environment. We will ensure that our council and our district play their part in tackling the Climate Emergency.

3. The corporate plan includes a range of biodiversity commitments including:

Include in the council's Open Space Strategy opportunities to increase biodiversity, increase tree cover, and consider carefully the use of our open spaces.

Develop a Biodiversity Net Gain Targeting Strategy and contribute to a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire.

Explore setting up a Habitat Bank to deliver biodiversity offsetting requirements and facilitate tree planting.

4. This commitment is further reflected in the decision to appoint a cabinet member with a portfolio for climate and environment.

Background

5. The framework for the development of Climate Action Plans for the councils includes the development of long-term Biodiversity Plans (2021-2030). Increasing carbon storage and sequestration through biodiversity enhancement will be an essential element of achieving the councils' carbon neutral targets.
6. The Insight and Policy team are currently leading the development of a new Tree Policy and Tree Strategy for the Councils. This will progress the corporate plan action to: *Develop a tree-planting strategy and work with partners to plant more trees across the district.*
7. There are advanced plans to establish an Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and the Oxfordshire Growth Board is setting up an Environmental Advisory Group. The planned Ox-Cam Arc includes a set of environmental principles that are seeking to achieve a *"doubling of the area of land managed primarily for nature"* and *"delivering a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain from all forms of development"*. South Cambridgeshire District Council for example has recently published a Doubling Nature Strategy. This is in line with the corporate plan action to: *Take an active role in the Oxford-Cambridge arc to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies.*
8. It is expected that the statutory duties of local authorities in relation to biodiversity and the natural environment will be strengthened in the forthcoming Environment Bill. (The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 currently includes a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity). This includes duties to establish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to deliver 10% Net Biodiversity Gain from new developments.
9. The councils currently lack dedicated resources to ensure effective delivery of corporate biodiversity objectives and were not in a position to allocate new resources in the latest budget round (21/22). The lack of capacity means that we are limited to a somewhat ad hoc and reactive approach. There is understandable shared frustration - from residents, community groups and Members - that the Councils have not yet been able to make significant progress in this area. Significant officer time is currently absorbed in managing this. Dominic Lamb and Andy Egan in consultation with Michelle Wells and Suzanne Malcom have developed a proposal for a Biodiversity Working Group as a positive way forward.

Main subject of report

10. Given that much current strategic development of biodiversity and nature recovery work is taking place on a county wide basis, it makes sense from both an ecosystem and strategic perspective to consider how we can best take forward and deliver on our biodiversity commitments on a joint South and Vale basis. With this area very much being one where cross sector partnership working is required, it will be helpful to our partners to adopt a joined-up approach.
11. A single joint member and officer working group that can report to the South CEEAC and Vale CEAC seems to be the best approach given:
 - our limited capacity to manage and service multiple groups;
 - the advantages of developing a shared understanding between key members and officers
 - providing a streamlined process to channel the high level of Member interest in this area
12. The proposed purpose of the Biodiversity Working Group is:
To advise and help shape the delivery of the Councils' corporate plan biodiversity, nature protection and nature recovery objectives.
13. The proposed remit is to:
 - Advise on the development of a biodiversity strategy and plan
 - Consider the councils' approach to nature protection and recovery
 - Identify the resource requirements for the effective delivery of corporate plan biodiversity objectives.
 - Consider the potential for carbon offsetting to contribute to the Councils' carbon neutral targets
 - Act as a sounding board for specific schemes such as: nature recovery networks, habitat banking and a tree planting policy and strategy
 - Make recommendations to the South CEEAC and Vale CEAC with respect to their role to *"advise Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and ecological crisis"*
 - Consider and review the potential biodiversity impacts of major new initiatives such as Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and the Ox-Cam Arc.
 - Consider the implications for the Councils of new duties and obligations as proposed in the Environment Bill.
14. It is proposed that the membership of the Biodiversity Working Group is:
Core members:
 - Three Councillors from each district; nominated by the Cabinet leads for environment
 - SMT representative: Suzanne Malcom
 - Insight and Policy Manager: Michelle Wells
 - Planning Policy Manager: Lucy Murfett
 - Specialist Planning Team Leader: Dominic Lamb
 - Climate Action Lead: Andy Egan

Occasional members: will be invited where they are relevant items on the agenda e.g. from Property, Legal, Parks/ Grounds maintenance

15. It is anticipated that meetings will be held every two months for first six months and then quarterly thereafter.

Options

16. There are a number of different options of how best to progress the council's biodiversity work. The option of a joint South and Vale and joint member and officer working group has been identified as the most effective and efficient way to make progress given the very limited capacity we currently have. Other options would be to have two separate working groups and/or an officer only group. An alternative approach would be to wait until the council is able to recruit a Biodiversity Lead or similar post before initiating this work. This would be subject to a growth bid in a future budget round.

Climate and ecological impact implications

17. The implementation of the Council's ecological emergency declaration is explicitly designed to achieve positive ecological, climate and sustainability impacts. It is understood that embedding consideration of ecological impacts across all Council decision making and project development is an important step towards making meaningful progress in protecting and restoring the natural world in South Oxfordshire.
18. The Council currently employs 2 full time ecologist's whose primary role is dealing with ecological issues within the planning system, managing the Great Crested Newt District Licence scheme and managing the councils Countryside Sites. Only very limited capacity is currently available for developing new biodiversity projects or delivering the aims of the ecological emergency declaration.
19. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Biodiversity Lead role that could provide leadership and co-ordination this area of work, given the level of commitment to it in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24.

Financial Implications

20. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £2.6 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus).
21. This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.
22. The Biodiversity Working Group will identify the costs associated with the projects prioritised for implementation. Before proceeding with any options, a financial evaluation will be undertaken to assess these costs, before recommendations are made to the Cabinet.

23. As work develops and funding is required, projects and activities will be subject to individual business cases as appropriate, and financial scrutiny.

Legal Implications

24. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise in respect of individual projects included within the subsequent work programme as they are scoped, approved by Cabinet and implemented. These will be subject to identification and appropriate action as required.

Risks

25. There is a significant reputational risk for the Council in not taking action and not allocating or aligning resources to fulfil its Corporate Plan objectives for the environment and nature.

26. There is an overriding risk that the state of nature and biodiversity will continue to deteriorate in the district unless the Council takes decisive action to ensure effective nature protection and recovery.

Other implications

27. None.

Conclusion

28. This report has presented the rationale for the establishment of a Biodiversity Working Group as the best option to ensure a joined-up approach in progressing the biodiversity commitments in the corporate plan.

29. The CEAC is therefore invited to make a recommendation to Cabinet to approve the establishment of a joint South and Vale member and officer Biodiversity Working Group

