

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Cabinet

held on Friday 27 September 2024 at 10.30 am in
Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close,
Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Bethia Thomas (Chair), Mark Coleman (Vice-Chair), Andy Crawford, Lucy Edwards, Andy Foulsham and Helen Pighills

Officers: Emily Barry (Democratic Services Officer), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place) and Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader).

Remote attendance:

Councillors: Sue Caul, Neil Fawcett, Hayleigh Gascoigne, Sarah James, Diana Lugova and Viral Patel.

Officers: Andrew Busby (Head of Development & Corporate Landlord), Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment), Jessie Fieth (Senior Climate Change Officer), Paula Fox (Development Manager), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations) and Heather Saunders (Corporate Energy Officer).

45 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

46 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

47 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2024 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

48 Declarations of interests

Councillor Andrew Crawford declared an interest in items 9 and 10 as a Director of Westmill Solar – a co-operative based in Watchfield. Councillor Crawford remained in the room and voted on these items as there was no conflict of interest.

49 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

50 Public participation

Three members of the Vale of White Horse District Council addressed Cabinet:

1. Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne, as chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC), addressed Cabinet on items 9 and 10 of the agenda, Operational Net Zero Target and District Net Zero Target. She advised that the reports had been discussed by CEAC at their meeting in July. Councillor Gascoigne highlighted to Cabinet that the targets had been set in the absence of any data and before a dedicated officer team had been in place which she felt was important context for the review of the target. She was keen to highlight the potential impact the removal of the targets would have on CEAC's reputation and that setting realistic interim targets with annual reporting would be beneficial.
2. Councillor Sarah James, as leader of the Green Group at Vale of White Horse District Council, addressed Cabinet on items 9 and 10 of the agenda, Operational Net Zero Target and District Net Zero Target. She highlighted that achieving net zero was a priority of Green councillors and congratulated Cabinet on the progress made to date. Despite this progress it was clear that the current interim target would not be achieved. Councillor James noted the severe regional rainfall event that the district had experienced that week which was a predictable impact of climate change that had disrupted residents and the local economy. She went on to highlight that Council had voted for SMART targets in July and in light of this asked that Cabinet strengthen the recommendations before them in respect of items 9 and 10 and require the targets set to be SMART.
3. Councillor Viral Patel, a councillor at Vale of White Horse District Council, addressed Cabinet on items 9 and 10 of the agenda, Operational Net Zero Target and District Net Zero Target. He echoed the Councillors Gascoigne and James and congratulated Cabinet on the progress made to date. Councillor Patel reflected on how useful the modelling in the officer report was and that if all four models were delivered how close that would bring the district to net zero. He highlighted that this progress was dependant on decarbonising the council's refuse fleet. Councillor Patel was keen that Cabinet did not revise the target now to simply revise again in the future and that a move was made towards SMART targets for both district and operational net zero.

All speakers were thanked for their contribution and their comments would be discussed at the relevant agenda items.

51 Recommendations and updates from other committees

The 'recommendations and updates from other committees' report was received by Cabinet, and the recommendations would be considered at each agenda item.

Councillor Katharine Foxhall, as chair of scrutiny, had requested that her thanks were passed on for the changes that had been made to the waste and street cleansing strategy following scrutiny's comments made at their meeting in July.

The Chair thanked officers, Scrutiny Committee, the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee.

52 Vale Local Plan Part 2 Review

Cabinet received the Vale Local Plan Part 2 Review paper from the head of policy and programmes. The report sought agreement from Cabinet to publish the Regulation 10A review of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 and that no revision of any Local Plan Part 2 policies as the preparation of the Joint Local Plan will enable the council to adopt replacement policies quicker than a formal review of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LPP2).

The Cabinet member for policy and programmes, Councillor Andy Foulsham, introduced the report and highlighted the statutory duty to carry out the review and that the review had highlighted some need for updates but that these would take longer to progress than the Joint Local Plan 2041.

Cabinet discussed the report, noting that progression of the Joint Local Plan 2041 would achieve results sooner than a revision of LPP2 policies and to do both seemed inefficient.

Cabinet thanked scrutiny for their comments and noted that written responses had been provided on these.

RESOLVED:

(a) That Cabinet approve for publication of the Regulation 10A review of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

(b) That the Council will not revise any Local Plan Part 2 policies as the preparation of the Joint Local Plan will enable the council to adopt replacement policies quicker than a formal review of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

(c) To authorise the publishing of a formal statement confirming that Vale of White Horse District Council has completed the Regulation 10A review of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

53 Operational Net Zero Target

Cabinet received the Review of the 2030 Operational Net Zero Target report, from the head of policy and programmes. The report sought recognition of the significant progress made to date and to agree review of the need for an interim target as part of the development of the Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet member for climate action, nature recovery and strategic partnerships introduced the report which set out the council's progress to date on the council's operational carbon emissions. She highlighted that for the first time projections of the possible position in 2025 and beyond was presented. She went on to set out the four scenarios detailed in the report but pointed out that not all projects had committed funding and three of the scenarios would require full business cases to be worked up and would require consideration as part of the budget process.

The Cabinet discussed the report and reflected on the need to be ambitious with the target but also to balance this against the budget constraints. Cabinet commented that this was an internal target and therefore it was for the council to determine how they measured progress and the communications around this. Cabinet noted that the more detailed reporting would allow for the course to be steered more closely moving forward in conjunction with annual, SMART targets. Cabinet thanked all officers who had been involved in achieving the progress made to date.

Cabinet were satisfied with the report but wished to ensure, in line with comments made by Councillor James and Patel and the approved Council motion from July, that any future interim targets set were SMART.

RESOLVED:

(a) That Cabinet recognises the significant progress made in reducing the council's operational carbon emissions. These have reduced by 18 per cent since the council's Climate Action Plan baseline year of 2019/20 and by 49 per cent since Greenhouse Gas reporting commenced in 2009/10.

(b) That need for a SMART interim target is reviewed as part of the development of the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

54 District Net Zero Target

Cabinet received the Review of the District net-zero carbon target report from the head of policy and programmes. The report sought re-affirmation of Cabinet's commitment to accelerating progress towards achieving an ambitious 2045 target to be a net zero carbon district and agreement that the need for an interim target is reviewed as part of the development of the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet member for climate action, nature recovery and strategic partnerships introduced the report and reminded Cabinet that Vale of White Horse had declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee recommended that Vale of White Horse should become a carbon neutral district by 2045, with a 75 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. This target was adopted by Cabinet in December 2019.

Although good progress was being made, the Vale of White Horse interim target to reduce carbon emissions by 75 per cent by 2030 was not going to be reached. The Cabinet member highlighted that the council is limited in its ability to meet the target as a large proportion of district-wide emissions are outside of the council's influence. The council is committed to accelerating and supporting progress across the district and has invested significantly in building up the council's in-house capacity through the expansion of the climate and biodiversity team as well as providing support to other organisations in the district to reduce their emissions, for example through the Climate Action Fund grant scheme. The council is also working in partnership with other Oxfordshire local authorities and stakeholders to deliver the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan.

The paper set out three options for the council's district-wide net zero targets. Cabinet could choose to:

1. retain the current target, which is for Vale of White to be a carbon neutral district by 2045 and to retain the interim target of a 75 per cent reduction by 2030.
2. align with the national target to be carbon neutral by 2050.
3. retain the current target, which is for Vale of White to be a carbon neutral district by 2045 and review the need for an interim target as part of the development of the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

The recommendation being made to Cabinet was option 3. A 2045 target gave a realistic net zero date to work towards, whilst still being challenging enough to drive rapid progress and demonstrating Cabinet's ambitions for Vale of White Horse to be leading the way ahead of the national target.

Cabinet discussed the report commenting on schemes other authorities were implementing whilst acknowledging that there were areas where the district council had little or no influence. Members reflected they were proud to be on a Cabinet where this was a high priority.

Cabinet were again keen to ensure that the resolution reflected comments around the target being SMART part of which was to ensure that the targets set were realistic and achievable.

RESOLVED:

(a) That Cabinet re-affirms its commitment to accelerating progress towards achieving an ambitious 2045 target to be a net zero carbon district.

(b) That the need for a SMART interim target is reviewed as part of the development of the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

55 Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy

Cabinet received the joint waste resources and street cleansing report from the head of housing and environment. The report sought approval of the Joint Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy.

The Cabinet member for environmental services and waste introduced the report highlighting this was a joint policy created with South Oxfordshire District Council which set out the ambitions for household waste and cleanliness of streets across the districts. The Cabinet member thanked the scrutiny committee for their comments and noted that they were mostly agreed whilst some required further research.

Cabinet thanked officers for their work and commended the level of engagement which had taken place throughout the development of the policy with the outcome being a more engaging strategy that targeted younger audiences. Cabinet noted that whilst they welcomed some of the legislation in this area from central government the funding was needed to support this.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

(a) approves the Joint Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy as attached in Appendix 1.

(b) delegates to the Head of Housing and Environment to make any minor changes to future versions of the strategy in consultation with the Cabinet member for Environmental Services and Waste

56 Didcot Technology Park Local Development Order

Cabinet received the Didcot Technology Park – Proposed Local Development Order report from the head of planning. The report sought a recommendation to Council that the Didcot Technology Park Local Development Order (LDO), is adopted subject to completion of a legal agreement.

The Cabinet member for planning introduced the report informing Cabinet that an LDO effectively grants planning permission for specific development in a defined area. The proposed LDO was for an employment site provision of up to 150,000 sqm and expired in 2042 in line with the expiry of the Enterprise Zone. The Cabinet member went on to advise that the LDO would be reviewed every five years and could be revoked at any time. She concluded that adoption would be subject to securing a Section 106 legal agreement.

Cabinet noted there had been a number of improvements to the LDO namely in relation to encouraging active travel with improved cycle parking provision and the provision of cycle and pedestrian routes to the site. Cabinet asked for confirmation that the business rates secured from the development would be retained by the district. The head of finance confirmed that the site was within Enterprise Zone 2 and that there had been no decision on what projects the retained rates would be spent on.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Council that:

1. The Didcot Technology Park Local Development Order (LDO) (attached at Appendix 3 to this report), is adopted subject to completion of a legal agreement securing the elements referred to in paragraph 9.

The meeting closed at 12.03 pm