

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

held on Monday, 19 April 2021 at 6.00 pm



This was a virtual, online meeting.

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

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

Officers: Harry Barrington-Mountford, Andy Egan, Elizabeth Kingdom, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Heather Saunders, Michelle Wells.

Also present: Cabinet Member Councillor Catherine Webber.

40. Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The chair updated the committee on some news regarding Faringdon Leisure Centre – independent external funding had been secured for green works. Replacement of the gas boilers with heat source pumps and potentially solar. Work had started quickly with the council's leisure team, starting in March 2021.

The chair informed the committee that at Vale scrutiny committee, a joint task and finish group had been agreed to with South scrutiny committee. This will be focussed on investigating how we can source the retrofit skills needed locally for carrying out works for the 'Green Home Grants'. These were extended and have now stopped, but due to be replaced with something else.

From now on, reports sent to committees, Cabinet and Council would include a section on environmental implications, just as there was a section for legal and financial implications.

The Town and Parish Council Forum on 24th May would have a focus on the environment, to share ideas and what worked well.

Chair added that the committee were due to review the trees policy in the next meeting planned for 14 June 2021. There could be a subset to the Biodiversity Working Group.

41. Apologies for absence

Councillor Duveen gave apologies.

Cabinet member, Councillor Debby Hallett, intended to introduce an item but had to send her apologies.

42. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

44. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 14 December 2020 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting, and the chair will sign them as such.

45. Public participation

There was no public participation.

46. CEAC review

Councillor Grant introduced the report, which is a review the CEAC's effectiveness a year from establishment. What worked, and what would you change? The report presented today had been produced by council officers to analyse the results of the Vale CEAC review surveys. There were two surveys - one for committee members and another survey for Cabinet members.

Councillor Grant explained that tonight, the focus was on reviewing the output of the surveys, and in particular, the recommendations within. It was mentioned that we now have two Climate Action Lead Officers – Elizabeth Kingdom had joined the Insight and Policy team, so there was an increased resource for this work.

The information gained would be used to help shape the recommendations, thus improving the effectiveness of the committee. Ensuring that the work of committee aligned with the aims and objectives of the Vale Corporate Plan.

Vale CEAC did not favour a change of name. The committee also felt that quarterly meetings were sensible. However, the dates would need to be planned to fit in with key Corporate Plan milestones. Potentially, any key consultations that fall outside of CEAC meeting dates, could be picked up through Task and Finish groups.

Summary of key findings of the surveys, as listed in the report:

- “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.”

The committee reviewed the key findings and agreed with the recommendations proposed within. These included the following recommendations to Cabinet.

Recommended to Cabinet:

- That the committee plays a formal role in the monitoring of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and reviews the quarterly performance reports that are part of the council’s performance management framework. (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 committee to play a key role in advising on its delivery. The committee’s meetings calendar will align with the corporate plan’s quarterly performance monitoring cycle.)
- That task and finish groups are established to work alongside officers on the Corporate Plan, communications and engagement, Zero Carbon definition, and relevant consultations. (They will report to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee on a regular basis. 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 should be led by a committee member to facilitate and manage input to the groups and feedback to the committee.)
- That the Chair of the committee be invited to attend the Cabinet meeting after each Climate Emergency Advisory Committee meeting 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.

Other matters not requiring a Cabinet decision:

- The Chair of the committee and the Cabinet member for climate emergency and environment will review reports to Council, Cabinet and committees to ensure they consider climate and ecological implications.
- The Chair of the committee and Cabinet member for climate emergency and environment will receive monthly briefings from the Strategic Lead for Climate Action to ensure information is shared.
- The Cabinet member for climate emergency and environment is requested to flag any matters across other Cabinet portfolios where committee advice, input or guidance would be beneficial in advance of any formal decision-making, so these can be added to the committee’s work programme.

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

Cabinet member for environment, Councillor Catherine Webber, introduced the Biodiversity Work Programme 2021-22.

It was a strategic response to the Corporate Plan, the carbon neutral target set by the council, and the climate emergency declaration. To bring performance reports to the CEAC to review, check and challenge against CEAC projects.

The committee reviewed the report and asked a few questions on the formatting of the report which was explained.

The committee noted the progress to date on the climate action and biodiversity work programme for 2021/22.

Recommended to Cabinet to approve the 2021/22 climate action and biodiversity work programme.

48. Climate Action Plan Development

Cabinet member, Councillor Webber, introduced the Climate Action Plan Development. Year one focussed on the carbon baseline. Up to 2024, the action plan is a named commitment in the Corporate Plan.

A discussion was had regarding ensuring data is meaningful. It was expressed that involving County was important and keeping up good communications. Good work was happening. The framework was welcomed.

Committee asked how the “green champions” would work. Andy Egan, Climate Action Lead, explained that there would be genuine ownership – champions would have passion, knowledge, and the skills to lead and motivate.

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

Committee decided to agree to the proposed methodology.

Recommended to Cabinet to adopt the proposed methodology/developed process for the Climate Action Plan.

49. Biodiversity Action Working Group

Councillor Grant introduced this item and explained that the “working” part of the title was important, as was preferred to the previously used “steering”.

Rewilding was best to lock up carbon. Joint working with South CEEAC was proposed, with officers and members. Bring expertise together. There would be three nominated Councillors per district, nominated by Cabinet, and select officers.

The tree planting policy may be ready for Autumn 2021 and is important to residents.

The committee were supportive of joint working and welcomed an increase in this.

Recommended to Cabinet to establish 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.

CEAC members should contact Councillor Webber if they are interested in getting involved.

50. DEFRA Consultation on environmental principles

The consultation will start on 17 May 2021, and Councillor Grant envisaged a task and finish group for this task. The end date for consultation was 02 June. The committee would be invited to attend to provide their input.

51. NPPF Task and Finish Group

Councillor Batts expressed that there was a positive and proactive approach from the District.

Councillor Grant, before closing the meeting, mentioned that the intention was to keep the meeting set for 14 June 2021. The tree planting policy will be an item at this meeting. Future meetings would reflect the Corporate Plan timetable.

The meeting closed at 6.49 pm