Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Group

**HELD ON THURSDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10.00 AM
VIRTUAL VIA MS TEAMS**

Present:

Councillors; Sue Cooper, David Harvey, Andrea Powell, Dan Sames, Pete Sudbury and Catherine Webber

Officers: Sarah Gilbert, (Oxfordshire County Council), Kevin Jacob (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Joe Kay, (Oxfordshire County Council), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive - Place, South and Vale Councils) and Archie Martin (Future Oxfordshire Partnership)

12   Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest and Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Hayes, Oxford City Council. Councillor Dan Sames, Cherwell District Council, indicated that he had to leave the meeting at 11:00.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair noted that the agenda for the meeting was comparatively light, but that there would be opportunity to discuss potential future items as part of the discussion around the update from the officer group and future work programme.

13   Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on the 3 August 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

14   Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) Update Paper - September 2021

The advisory group considered an update from the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), presented by Joe Kay, Transport Lead, Oxfordshire County Council. The following points were highlighted:

- The current LTCP was a statutory local transport plan and an update to the Local Transport Plan Four (which had been published in 2016).

- The LTCP was broken down into two documents, the vision document which was released in February 2021 and the full report that encompassed feedback from the LTCP vision document.

- The advisory group was informed that the LTCP was due to go to Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet on the 19 October 2021 and if approved, would be subjected to public consultation in November 2021. It was highlighted that other documentation would accompany the LTCP to provide context and more in-depth details of specific policies.

- The importance of the decarbonisation chapter in the LTCP paper was stressed. It was outlined as one of the key challenges in the document, and the different transport approaches that would be taken to achieve net zero carbon by 2050.

- Targets were necessary and important to measure the success of these initiatives. These targets were set out in a timeline of a ten-year period or more. For example, a key target was to have moved to a zero- carbon transport network by 2040.

- Oxfordshire County Council was seeking feedback on the LTCP from a wide range of partners and key stakeholders. This would help to inform the paper before it was considered by Cabinet in November 2021.

Members of the advisory group thanked Joe Kay for the introduction and welcomed the LTCP as a positive contribution. In discussion they raised queries regarding the scope of the public consultation and the weight the final LTCP would have in planning decisions. It was confirmed that there was a wide scope for involvement in the consultation including by town and parish councils, and other stakeholders who had engaged in earlier work around a transport vision. The consultation would be accessible online via Oxfordshire County Council's dedicated consultation portal, as well as other methods of receiving responses.

Whilst the LTCP did not carry formal weight in planning terms, officers were working with district and city council colleagues to develop guidelines which would inform the drafting of formal Local Plan policies which would carry planning weight. Officers were also working with colleagues within the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 team and therefore it was considered that there would be a consistent common thread in respect to transport and connectivity across Local Plans and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

Members felt that there should a be a strong focus on capitalising on the remote working agenda brought forward by the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of transport planning.

There was a discussion between members around the most effective balance between planning guidance and mandatory planning regulations in supporting moving towards a net zero carbon transport infrastructure. It was felt that unless such requirements were made mandator rather than guidance, they would not be given due weight and delivered in practice by developers.

A lack of public transport in more rural locations was raised which contributed to car use. Whilst the shift to electric vehicles would help mitigate carbon emissions, it was felt that viable public transport infrastructure also needed to be provided. Discussion included bus stops, in some cases with limited car parking, potentially acting as series of mini-transport

hubs, linked into cycleways and footpaths. Members discussed in particular connecting different modes of transport together, into a seamless system of transport for the general public. This did not necessarily involve a big investment in infrastructure but would help demonstrate to the public that viable alternatives to the car existed.

A number of members commented that adequate maintenance of cycleways and footpaths was important if they were to be an attractive and safe option for residents, but also discussed the positive impact flora and vegetation along footways and cycleways verges could have a positive effect on decarbonisation and limit climate change.

Members also highlighted the importance of rail, in the development of carbon neutral transport/infrastructure.

The Chair thanked Joe Kay for presenting the update and reiterated how the councils within Oxfordshire, individual members of the advisory group and the public could contribute to the LTCP public consultation.

15 Update on officer group to support the Environment Advisory Group

Sarah Gilbert, Climate Action Team Leader, Oxfordshire County Council, provided a verbal update on the establishment of a specialist officer group to help inform and support the work of the Environment Advisory Group, given the need to make the best use of the resources available and to work together. The group was comprised of representatives from across the partner Oxfordshire Councils.

The following items had been discussed and flagged by the officer group as potential future items for the advisory group work programme:

- Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Report, (PAZCO) – 1) creation of a delivery plan, creating deliverables that could be used as benchmarks. 2) consideration of how to engage community voices, key stakeholders, and the general public into the discussions.

- Issues and opportunities around retrofitting of green technologies to existing homes including funding/bids.

- Zero Carbon homes – reference work had been undertaken by Friends of the Earth and Bioregional on what was needed to bring the development of such homes forward.

In discussion, it was suggested that establishing a reference group with representatives in the building industry could be potentially useful in respect of new Zero Carbon homes and the retrofitting of existing homes.

Members agreed that the significant cost of individual retrofitting of properties was inefficient and that the scale of the challenge of meeting the number of retrofits required per annum needed to achieve Net Zero was significant and very challenging. It was noted that a task and finish group established by the joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently undertaken a review around retrofitting homes and set out a number of recommend ways forward. It agreed that the report should be circulated to the members of the advisory group.

Members also referred to an acute lack of labour resource and the specialist skills within the building industry to support retrofitting. It was suggested that there was an urgent need to increase and promote apprenticeships and college courses in this area as well as continuing to work with OxLEP on the issue.

In response to a discussion regarding the data sets used by the Oxfordshire local authorities in respect of carbon emissions and the importance of shared approach to their use, Sarah Gilbert indicated that the understanding was that the data sets available to all councils originated from the same national sources, but that the officer group could investigate this further and get back to the advisory group.

The addition of items around PAZCO delivery and retrofitting to the next agenda were supported by members.

(Councillor Dan Sames left the meeting at 11:05)

The Chair thanked the officers and members for their contributions. The update was noted.

16   Future work programme

The advisory group discussed its work programme for future meetings, considering the proposed items discussed under the previous agenda item. Agreed items for the meeting on 26 November 2021 included:

• Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Report, (PAZCO) – 1) creation of a delivery plan, creating deliverables that could be used as benchmarks. 2) consideration of how to engage community voices, key stakeholders, and the general public into the discussions.

• Issues and opportunities around retrofitting of green technologies to existing homes including funding /bids.

• Carbon emissions. Common data sets for authorities and monitoring – provisional.

The Chair raised the importance of communications with the public and wider stakeholders and members discussed communication methods, including the potential for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to play a central role in this topic of discussion. It was suggested that a strategic communication plan could be developed for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's work around climate change, through the advisory group. Officers indicated they would seek to obtain high level advice from relevant officers supporting the Partnership on the potential communications role of the advisory group.

Members of the advisory group also commented on the importance of councillors lobbying HM Government on environmental issues such as mandatory building regulations.

17   Dates of future meetings

The dates for future meetings as set out in Agenda was noted.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am