

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Climate Emergency Advisory Committee



held on Tuesday, 5 April 2022 at 6.00 pm as a virtual meeting

This meeting was broadcasted live and can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dDRmfHU70c>

### Open to the public, including the press

#### Present:

**Councillors:** David Grant (Chair), Amos Duveen (Vice-Chair), Ron Batstone (as substitute for Hayleigh Gascoigne), Eric Batts, Eric de la Harpe, Alison Jenner and Bob Johnston

**Officers:** Vicky Aston (Planning Infrastructure Team Leader), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Michael Flowers (Democratic Services Officer), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Heather Saunders (Energy Strategy and Projects Officer), Bertie Smith (Broadcasting Officer)

**Guests:** Councillor Catherine Webber (Cabinet member for climate emergency and environment)

### 85 Chair's announcements

The chair welcome everyone to the meeting and provided an update to members on some of the notable events surrounding the climate that had taken place since the committee last met. The chair highlighted:

- a. The recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and its efforts reduce carbon emissions.
- b. That applications for the Climate Action Fund available for community groups to apply for up to £5000 would close at midday on the 25 April.
- c. That the consultation for the Joint Design Guide, which the committee had contributed to, was now closed. It was confirmed that it would be put forward for adoption in late spring. The chair also added that the cabinet member for planning had invited interested parties to add their views during the next consultation period in May-June.
- d. The council had appointed an external funding lead.
- e. The Friends of the Earth – Oxfordshire's 'Great Big Green Week' would be happening in September.

### 86 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne.

## **87 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **88 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

## **89 Minutes of the last meeting**

**RESOLVED:** To note the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

## **90 Public participation**

There were no public speakers.

## **91 Task and Finish groups update**

There were no updates from the task and finish group.

## **92 Update from the Cabinet member for Environment**

The Cabinet member for climate change and environment provided the committee with a number of updates, which were:

- a. Work had begun at Faringdon Leisure Centre for the introduction of solar panels and air source heat pumps, and the gas boilers would be removed once this was completed. The view was that the refurbishment would improve the carbon emission efficiency, and would become the council's first low carbon and renewable energy building. The council was also preparing to apply for funding so it could improve other facilities, specifically the leisure centres of Abingdon and Wantage.
- b. The cabinet member had met with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to discuss their strategy for electric vehicle infrastructure. There was a pilot scheme for a Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund underway, and South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse would look into whether a joint bid could improve the funding received.
- c. E-learning was being looked into, with reference to how greater learning and training could be provided.
- d. There had been 420 trees planted at Rye Farm Meadow. Community groups were encouraged to plant trees on suitable district council land. The cabinet member also added that the process of planting and progressing 'tiny forests' was being looked into.
- e. A paper on future waste provisions was going to be taken to Cabinet. The committee was invited to future discussions. The committee was told that in relation to this, Biffa was confirmed to be trialling an all-electric waste collection vehicle, and the council was eager to see how this performed in a rural district that contained some urbanised areas.
- f. The Environmental Act progress is slow with many elements of regulation still to be published, and the committee would receive further updates as it progressed.

- g. The plastic tax would come into effect from 1 April, and this would ensure plastic projects had no less than 30 per cent recycled plastic.
- h. The Consistency of Standards consultation results were expected to be released in June.
- i. South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse would need to consider whether to issue a joint response regarding the environmental targets that were running to the 11 May.
- j. The annual air quality statement was now published, and data was being collected.
- k. The procurement for air quality contract and analysis had been completed, and the existing supplier had been successful. They were now awaiting feedback from legal services before proceeding.

The committee asked if the cabinet member was aware of a county pilot for electric vehicle charging places where there were no off-road places. This was where a duct ran under the pavement and had a holder that could be pulled out towards a parked car. The response was that they were aware of similar issues. The cabinet member added that 50 electronic vehicle chargers were in-place at council car parks, but they noted that street chargers were a known issue. A second question was asked seeking clarification on whether the Faringdon Leisure Centre would be using renewable power, including batteries. The response was that batteries were not expected with any surplus energy going back into the grid rather than being stored in a battery.

### **93 Future items**

The committee requested that the results of the trial for the electric waste vehicle in their district be presented to the committee once they were available.

### **94 Environment Act**

Councillor Amos Duveen joined the meeting during the item.

The Climate and biodiversity Team Leader introduced the item, and provided a high-level presentation which introduced the act and provided wider context into the aspects covered under the legislation. The officer focused on waste and resource efficiency, air quality, and nature and biodiversity. The officer also confirmed that they would be seeking to make this a standing item to ensure the committee received further updates as the legislation progressed.

For waste and resource efficiency, the act would see greater producer responsibility for all levels of waste in the hierarchy, and those producing the packaging would pay for the cost of recycling and disposing of any waste. Confirmation was given that the act would have an impact on how councils across the country would organise waste collection services, however the committee was informed that housing and environment would lead on the response for this section of the act. As the implications were not yet known, the committee would receive further briefings as further guidance and regulations were published.

For air quality, the government was looking to set air quality targets for fine particulate matter in ambient air. There would be an amendment to part four of the Environment Act 1995 which would strengthen the requirements of the national air quality strategy. In addition, amendments to the Local Air Quality Management Framework would enable greater cooperation with relevant bodies. Finally, an amendment to part three of the Cleaner

Air Act 1993 would enable quicker and more proportional enforcement of smoke controlled areas.

For nature and biodiversity, objectives would be introduced requiring public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity in their exercising of functions. A mandated ten per cent biodiversity net gain would be introduced in the planning system, with exceptions for householder applications and urgent crown development. They were expecting this to come into force in November 2023. For planning applications, it was confirmed that all off-site gains would be recorded on the register, and all off-site gains would need to be maintained for a minimum of 30 years. Public bodies were also expected to look at their policies at least every five years in order to assess their actions and see how they could further improve conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

The committee asked whether developers could place the biodiversity net-gain in another district or county across the country under the new legislation or if there were any rules in place to encourage the benefit to be on the site of the application. The response from the officer were that checks, and balances would be in-place, and that the assessment matrix had a multiplier based on distance, and so the further away the net-gain was from the application site, the greater the financial cost to the developer. The officer also confirmed that during the infancy of the bill, the government would act as a service provider of last resort.

The committee asked whether the council could set up its own biodiversity bank and insist on payments from developers being paid into their own system. The response from the officer was that the council could introduce its own biodiversity bank, but would have to consider establishing their own commercial vehicle to enable it to work, and would not be able to force a developer to use their own commercial wing.

## **95 Water Resources South East (WRSE): Futureproofing water supplies**

Councillors Ron Batstone and Bob Johnston left the meeting before the start of the item.

The Planning Infrastructure Team Leader introduced the item, and provided a presentation on the processes involved in progressing infrastructure development. The officer explained that the plan, which included the reservoir, was a multi-phased approach between the years 2022-2027 and was a five gate staged process with up to five phases. The officer during the presentation highlighted that if no action was taken in relation to growing water needs between 2025-2050, then an extra 3.435 million litres of water would be needed for public water supplies to address the growing pressures. For this issue, it was confirmed that the regulators had committed to work with water users to ensure better water resource planning. The aim of the process was designed to meet the water needs that were set out in the national framework and the projects in the Vale of White Horse would fit into the gated process. The gated processes were designed to ensure companies would meet water resource solutions that were allocated funding in the water resource management plan stage 2019.

The standard gated schemes being investigated at gate two would include seven water transfers, three reservoirs, and five other projects. For the Vale of White Horse, it included the Southeast Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), the Severn to Thames transfer, and the Thames Water to Southern Water transfer. Following an explanation of the projects, the officer provided a map of the emerging regional plan of 2025-2040 and highlighted the main

objections put forward by the council. The officer in their conclusion also added that the outcome of the consultation by the department for environment, food, and rural affairs for the national policy statement for water resources infrastructure, which closed in January 2019 was pending.

The committee asked how much of the water demand would be from London in comparison the rest of the south-east. The officer responded that they did not have this information available, but they would provide a response to members after the meeting. The committee commented that there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction over needing to take on unpopular infrastructure which might not benefit the area and rather benefit residents from outside the district. The officer added that there was a national need for more water which would include Oxfordshire, and it was right for the government to look at solutions which might solve the issues. The committee also sought clarification on the best way that the council could influence the process, and influence which options should be taken forward. In addition to this, the committee wanted to understand how they might influence decisions to help influence how the environmental impacts could be offset. The officer responded that comments could be submitted at each stage in the process, but the main opportunity to influence outcomes would be from the consultation periods.

## **96 Corporate Plan - Performance Report for Quarter 3**

The Head of Policy and Programmes introduced the item and informed the committee that there had been some marked improvements in terms of presentation, and previous comments had been taken on-board, which resulted in some changes.

The committee commented that it was happy with the progress being made.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm