

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Climate

Emergency

Advisory Committee



held on Monday, 23 January 2023 at 6.00 pm
this was a virtual meeting

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors:

Hayleigh Gascoigne (chair), Eric Batts, Eric De La Harpe (vice chair) David Grant, Alison Jenner, Bob Johnston and Catherine Webber.

Officers: Chloe Bunting (Senior Climate Action Officer), Jessie Fieth (Senior Climate Action Officer), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Dominic Lamb (Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes).

Guests: Cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Environment, Councillor Sally Povolotsky

28. Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the committee and explained the procedure for the meeting. Chair explained that she was hoping to best direct member's expertise in order to have the best impact on the council. The committee was advisory not scrutiny – focus should be on member's expertise. One of the first upcoming tasks was the creation of a waste task and finish group. Hopefully this would be the start of more research, and task and finish groups.

29. Apologies for absence

None

30. Declaration of interests

Councillor Sally Povolotsky, Cabinet member for Environment, notified the chair that she works for Innovate UK, for zero emissions transport.

31. Urgent business

None

32. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved: Minutes of the last committee held on 10 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

33. Public participation

None

34. Update from the Cabinet Member for Environment

Cabinet member for environment updated the committee.

- There had been five months of UK100 academy for the cabinet member. She will be sharing what she has learnt via the chair.
- Looking to making CEAC more advisory and help shape future services.
- Waste service renewal, there were innovations to consider, environmental impact of waste, and improved service delivery.
- The climate team has been in place for five months and has been progressing project delivery in the CAP.
- Decarbonisation grants for two leisure centres (White Horse and Wantage Leisure Centres) had been successfully attained after a bidding round. Engaging with consultants to help identify sites for decarbonisation for the whole council estate.
- Climate Action Fund (CAF) – this had opened in October 2022 and was extended to January 2023. 18 applications were made. The maximum grant request was just over 55 thousand pounds. The results of the applications would be announced at the end of February. Small money can go a long way and behaviour changes were being made in the process. Schemes already supported by CAF funding were going well.
- The Thames Valley River Network: Officers reviewed effectiveness, and a decision was made to disband the network now, in order to focus on working more efficiently and effectively with existing catchment partnerships that already cover the area.
- On trees and nature recovery – two tree planting sites have been identified in Abingdon, including Herons Walk for flower planting. These will be Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funded and works will be carried out within our parks team. “Tiny forest” was stopped due to escalating costs and archaeological concerns on site.
- Trees for Climate Grant funding made available to the Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) – west of Vale of White Horse was covered, you can use funding in the 10-mile radius of the GWCF boundary, as far as East Hendred. Funding will pay for 100% cost of planting and for 15 years maintenance.
- Environment Advisory Group, or EAG – there was a need to be more strategic – how can EAG influence solar farm dialogue. We endorsed thematic work areas for Net Zero Route Map. Identified financing, communications and understanding existing works. Discussed acceleration of retrofit. The climate action website run by OCC will be expanded and promoted. Suggestion of an Oxfordshire climate adaptation and resilience database. Net zero action plan and PAZCO was still being looked at, but the resources were needed to progress further. PAZCO provided a vision.

A member asked about Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). There were no announcements yet.

Members were happy to see that decarbonisation was underway and agreed that a proper strategy for solar farms was vital - was it something that could be reviewed by FOP? Cabinet member reminded members of the enthusiasm and abilities within the committee and whether they can look at this as a committee, for progressing at their own pace. It was asked whether decarbonisation was a joint venture or solely Vale. Both councils have made separate ventures.

35. Environment Act update

Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader provided an update on the Environment Act. The slides presented will be published with the minutes.

Members commented on the fact there was not much to be updated on and they hoped to see more progress soon.

36. Presentation: Climate training platform for staff

A presentation was given by Chloe Bunting, Senior Climate Action Officer, on the training provisions for staff, with a view to developing similar training for members. There were four modules, ready for launch in the coming week:

- Understanding climate change
- Impacts of climate change
- How can we respond to climate change?
- The story so far at our council

Members were very pleased with what was produced and were looking forward to seeing how it would be developed.

37. Climate Action Plan Performance Quarter 2

Chair reminded committee to focus on topics members wished to see a deep dive on / a task and finish group or a future report request.

Red flagged things were queried:

- SD7 page 32 – no electric fleet yet, various components of the project are not ready yet, but other aspects have been completed. Cabinet member stated that we do have some fantastic public car chargers in our portfolio now, which will be great for smaller vehicles, up to 7.5 tonnes if needed.
- It was noted that some of the projects rated red were simply as such due to being much longer-term projects.
- Pg 48 OP8/9 – OP8 had lots of activity, but not quick to progress. OP9 was no longer active (Ox-Cam Arc).
- It was confirmed by officers that red items would remain on the tables and there was no plan to delete any for the reasoning that they could not be taken any further.
- SD2 – waste route optimisation. Residents concern was raised over the using unsuitable roads. Members were reminded that individual resident queries should be taken up with the Cabinet member
- Discussion about fleet – focus on fit, form and function. A fleet review was in progress.
- Members also raised questions about the air quality section and whether it included the Air Particulate Scheme. Officers stated a large amount will be in the Quarter 3 Report. A suggestion was made to bring back feedback on air quality to a future committee meeting.
- OP2 – were we promoting biodiversity. Officer mentioned the County Council were looking at climate adaptation and resilience.
- OP11 – working with project LEO.
- Members also mentioned being carbon neutral in relation to Abbey House, considering the temporary nature of the council's residency there. Should focus be on the next building. Officers stated that there was no reason to amend the action plan around Abbey House, adding that this may change in the future.

38. Domestic Retrofit for South and Vale

Jessie Fieth, Senior Climate Action Officer, introduced the report on Domestic Retrofit for South and Vale and the challenges faced, noting the limited power that the district council had in this matter. However, that did not stop the council from encouraging its progression. The officer provided some slides to the committee with some facts and figures. There were five themes in the paper, containing actions that can be taken. Committee was asked to give further comments and steer to the climate team by 23 January 2023.

Three ways were presented by which actions will be taken in this process.

- 1) Quick wins
- 2) Further research/ resources
- 3) Wider Partnerships

In discussion,

- Members noted the quick wins, and how a social media campaign should be considered a quick win. Committee was interested in how far-reaching that would it be. Officers replied that, with a variety of methods, the campaign would work to ensure as much engagement as possible. Some members did urge caution with the social media campaign to ensure the council was promoting the right things.
- Member expressed the desire to move away from factors controlled by County Council and move to areas the District Council had more control over.
- Members approved the idea of sharing equipment with other companies such as thermal imaging technology.
- There was suggestion of Q&As from successful retrofits.
- Members discussed the importance of finances needed for works, and what may be needed, such as loans and grants.
- Regarding additional resources, members agreed on using case studies. Members also agreed with the idea of engaging with people in their communities, so they can help people who need it.
- Some members agreed that the reduction in Council Tax incentive was not a good solution.
- Regarding wider partnerships members agreed that the “one stop shop” was the aim.
- Members did enquire about Cosy Homes and whether we should be catering to one private group. Officers stated that this was the only company in the local area that provides this facility currently.
- Members also stated the importance of lobbying central government.
- Discussion was had on focussing on what we know - send out letters using enforcement powers – can we resource for this?

Councillor Johnston left during this agenda item at 19.20

Officers were thanked for their work on the report.

39. Future items

- Reviewing the Solar Farm Strategy with FOP, consider what CEAC can do to move this forward.
- Task and finish group or officer report for future meeting for air quality
- Waste task and finish group
- Inviting Kevin Martin and Catriona Bass from Wildlife Trust to talk about biodiversity and water meadows
- Ideas for Phasing out single use plastic

The meeting closed at 19:40

Chair:

Date: