

# Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



## The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Group

HELD ON FRIDAY 7 JULY 2023 AT 10.00 AM

### Present:

**Councillors:** Andrew McHugh, Andrea Powell, Andrew Prosser, Anna Railton, Pete Sudbury and Bethia Thomas

**Officers:** Ian Boll (Cherwell District Council), Becky Chesshyre (Oxfordshire Partnerships), Inga Doherty (Oxfordshire County Council), Jessie Fieth (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils), Sarah Gilbert (Oxfordshire County Council), Susan Harbour (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Dale Hoyland (Oxfordshire County Council), Alex Jeffery (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Hannah Kenyon (West Oxfordshire District Council), Dominic Lamb (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils), Tom Layzell (Oxfordshire County Council), Suzanne Malcolm (Senior Responsible Officer), Jo Miskin (Cherwell District Council), Mish Tullar (Oxford City Council), Phil Wadsworth (Oxfordshire County Council), and Beth Wilks (Future Oxfordshire Partnership).

### **82 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements**

Apologies have been received from Councillor David Rouane, Chair of the Environment Advisory Group.

In the absence of Councillor Rouane, it was agreed by members present that Councillor Sudbury would Chair this meeting of the FOP Environment Advisory Group only.

### **83 Notes of the previous meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

## 84 Environment Advisory Group forward work programme

Referencing the forward work programme for the meeting on 9 November 2023, Councillor Railton suggested whether a separate discussion on biodiversity net gain targets should take place. Officers recommended that Matt Whitney, Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Manager, should be part of that discussion and recommended the item be added to the agenda for 9 November 2023.

**Action: Discussion on biodiversity net-gain targets to be added to forward work programme for 9 November 2023.**

Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager, advised members that a Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan (NZRMAP) update will come to every meeting as a standing agenda item giving a high-level review of the programme tracker but there would also be a spotlight at each EAG meeting on a specific topic.

Members praised the inclusion in the agenda of the notes from other advisory groups, but asked how they might access the reports that feed into those groups? Officers agreed to take this away as an action.

**Action: Officers to discuss how members might access reports included in agendas for other FOP advisory groups.**

## 85 Countywide Climate Adaptation & Resilience Strategy

Tom Layzell, Climate Adaptation Policy and Project Lead, Oxfordshire County Council, spoke to this agenda item and gave a presentation in support of the briefing paper in the agenda pack.

As a recap for the benefit of members Tom explained that in December 2022, a paper was presented to EAG with an outline of the climate adaptation and resilience workstream being led and coordinated by Oxfordshire County Council. Since that last report to EAG, the final specification for the evidence base and strategy had been agreed with stakeholders and consists of two work packages:

1. Assessment of climate vulnerability and health impacts for Oxfordshire
2. Development of the climate adaptation and resilience strategy for Oxfordshire

Tom explained progress to date in terms of work package 1 has included four key stages and four workshops have been undertaken with the Oxfordshire stakeholder group to ensure they have the opportunity to input into the work package approach and their respective requirements for the work.

Tom commented that work is still ongoing with Exeter University in the development of a skills and knowledge resource to support local decision makers on climate adaptation. The resource is expected to be finalised in September.

Members asked how much predictive analysis would be built into the toolkit? Tom advised members that the climate adaptation tool gives projections for climate at local areas to 2080, so will show users how the climate is expected to change according to both averages and extreme changes in climate.

Members were interested to understand the integration of the mapping layers into local plans being developed and how the insurance industry is involved with the work. Tom advised that in the case of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) he had met with planning policy officers from OCC and was aware of the timeliness in which they needed the data to inform the local plan. Unlocking the potential of the data would be having an online platform. Tom commented that the insurance industry was not involved in the vulnerability assessment but was keen to get them involved with members recommending that the industry could be a source of finance for the future.

Further questions from members spanned the topics of blue light responders, working with neighbouring authorities and where there is a role for a citizens assembly approach, to give people a sense that they have the power to adapt their lifestyles to climate change. Tom agreed that engagement and capacity building was hugely important to climate adaptation as well as communities and citizens being crucial to building resilience. Tom advised members that due to their being a part of Oxfordshire County Council, they were engaging with the fire and rescue service, and although there is more to-do with the likes of the Police and NHS, links already exist through emergency planning. On the point of geography, Tom explained the process was still in its early stage of development but engagement with other counties would be crucial as the scheme develops.

Members noted specifically the flood wardens' scheme and whether this scheme could be adapted into a climate adaptation scheme to cover other events such as heatwaves.

The discussion was summarised with members recommending a climate adaptation toolkit for Parish Councils, similar to the 20 mile-an-hour toolkit (part of 'Vision Zero'), could be developed. The Chair thanked Tom for the presentation.

## **86 Solar Farm Best Practice**

Dominic Lamb, Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils spoke to this agenda item on behalf of the EAG officer group.

In order to meet net zero targets in Oxfordshire by 2030, the county will need to have four-times more solar generating capacity than at present. Dominic explained that the briefing note has been produced following a request from the FOP Environment Advisory Group to help elected members and officers when considering how to promote best practice in the development of ground mounted solar farms. Dominic suggested that the report was available for all district and county colleagues and members to take away and build on, should they wish.

Members raised the issue of energy storage and what happens to energy generated by solar when it's not being fed into the grid. Councillor McHugh thanked officers for the report and suggested that the partnership could lobby HM Government to ensure that any new industrial site must have PV, including upgrading the infrastructure to support it. Dominic responded noting that infrastructure was a significant issue at the moment and a separate piece of working was ongoing on Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) to address this. Councillor Railton followed up on this topic, asking what plan FOP has to engage with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) on the topic of solar. Dominic assured members that there was a significant amount of work ongoing to engage with DNOs. Sarah Gilbert added that through the LAEP, DNOs would have better site of Councils ambitions and

infrastructure, as well as Councils in Oxfordshire having live site of constraints on the network.

Councillor Powell asked whether the length of the license for solar farms was a deterrent to developers? Officers present at the meeting didn't consider that the time length was a disincentive.

Members summarised the discussion by thanking officers for an excellent, and very useful piece of work.

## **87 Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan (NZRMAP) Progress Overview**

Beth Wilks, FOP Manager, spoke to this agenda item on behalf of the EAG officer group which provided an update on activity to operationalise the priority workstreams of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan (NZRMAP).

For the benefit of new members to the EAG, Beth provided brief background context on the NZRMAP. Beth explained that since the last update to EAG, officers and convening leads have been working together to draw up the next steps across the prioritised actions. The project tracker (appendix 1 of the report in the agenda pack) is the culmination of those discussions. Beth then outlined the progress and next steps for each of the prioritised workstreams.

Members thanked officers for their hard work to date and commended the momentum that was building around this work as well as praising the operationalisation and delivery of the plan to date. Members recommended that work already done through the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) road map and action plan should be leveraged.

On Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure, members were interested to understand whether activity around commercial electric vehicle charging points was being monitored? Mish Tullar, Oxford City Council, advised officers that Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding which has been awarded by Government for implementation in Oxfordshire is there to prime bringing forward EV charging. It will be commercially based approach on council and highways owned land but also on private and community owned land.

With reference to upscaling retrofit delivery and more specifically the Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG) members asked whether the 310 properties expected to be upgraded were being mapped for a visual picture of where schemes have been deployed. Dale Hoyland advised officers that two schemes, the Local Authority Delivered, phase 3 (LAD3) and the Home Upgrade Grant, phase 1 (HUG1) had been mapped already.

Members noted that unsuitable homes are still being added to the housing stock, with Councillor McHugh recommending that Government should be lobbied so that every house built after 2030 should to Passivhaus standard.

Members agreed with advice from officers to put on-hold the specific prioritised action of developing a collective purchasing approach that supports the deployment of rooftop solar on existing buildings pending the development of the FutureFit One Stop Shop (FOSS).

**Action: Alex Jeffery to circulate NZRMAP delivery update slides with the meeting notes.**

## **88 NZRMAP Spotlight Focus: Upscale Domestic Retrofit**

Dale Hoyland, Oxfordshire Retrofit Team Lead, Oxfordshire County Council, spoke to this agenda item which provided an update on work taking place across the county on delivery and plans to scale-up domestic retrofit.

Members highlighted that scale was still the greatest challenge and noted the importance of mapping where schemes benefit neighbourhoods through shared ground source heat pumps and air source heat pumps.

On building regulations, members suggested an opportunity for local authority building regulation teams to intervene at the beginning of domestic retrofit projects in terms of quality assurance, education and encouraging builders and architects to raise the standards of domestic retrofit projects.

The Chair thanked Dale for the update.

## **89 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference**

Members noted the Terms of Reference for the Environment Advisory Group which were endorsed by FOP at its meeting in June 2023.

## **90 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group Meeting Notes**

Members noted this agenda item.

## **91 Dates of future meetings**

Members noted the dates for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 11:58am.