

CABINET – 20 APRIL 2021

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Answers
<p>1. COUNCILLOR PETE SUDBURY</p> <p>Emissions Accounting: Whilst I am sure it can be argued that the methodology used by the Council is technically correct and follows BEIS guidance, I am concerned that the Council's Emissions accounting gives our citizens a false, incomplete and potentially misleading view of the Council's efforts and its real impact on the Climate Crisis, not least because it is extremely difficult to determine the effect of the Council's own efforts of a "like for like" basis.</p> <p>Two essentially extraneous factors in particular produce distortions which are larger than any of the underlying trends.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progressive decarbonisation of the electricity grid (66% in the 7 years to 2020), which is a "freeloader" effect, being nothing to do with the Council's efforts and capable of concealing poor or negative performance in (for example) energy efficiency. 2. Schools leaving the control of the Council. The emissions from these are transferred to the control of another entity, but appears in 	<p>COUNCILLOR YVONNE CONSTANCE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Emissions accounting</p> <p>In 2010/11 the council's emissions added to 68,041t CO₂e (55,862t CO₂e if deducting REGO-backed green electricity). By 2019/20, emissions had dropped to 19,164t CO₂e. This reduction was due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 149 schools becoming academies and no longer being part of the council's estate • Electricity grid decarbonisation • Council's energy efficiency and energy generation initiatives • Changes to contractual arrangements and modes of service delivery • Sale of corporate sites. <p>The table below shows a like-for-like comparison of 2010/11 and 2019/20, accounting for the effect of academisation, grid decarbonisation and sale of corporate sites. When considering the adjusted 2010/11 figure, a drop of 40% or 12,770t CO₂e by 2019/20 remains.</p>

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<p>the Council's accounting as though it were a genuine reduction in emissions. The atmosphere really does not care about a transfer of ownership.</p> <p>These two combined appear to account for over half of the stated reductions, rendering the headline decarbonisation rate of 65.7% since 2010/11 meaningless and extraordinarily misleading.</p> <p>In addition, the figures are further distorted in the "Zero by 2030" target by omitting schools and outsourced functions such as datacentres and highways maintenance, all of which are entirely attributable to, and fully under the control of the Council and its core operations.</p> <p>Please could you supply a tabulated Emissions Comparison 2019/20 and 2010/11, expressed on a "like for like" basis (i.e. Stripping out electricity decarbonisation and change of ownership effects) and a forecast statement of the expected emissions of the full Council estate (including schools, highway maintenance and datacentres) in 2030?</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="931 213 2040 718"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2010/11</th> <th>2019/20</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total emissions (t CO₂e)</td> <td>68,041</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Schools becoming academies</td> <td>-24,002</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grid decarbonisation</td> <td>-9,609</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Corporate disposals</td> <td>-2,496</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>New total emissions (t CO₂e)</td> <td>31,934</td> <td>19,164</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reduction</td> <td></td> <td>39.99%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Corporate emissions forecast to 2030</p> <p>The council has committed to net-zero emissions by 2030 across highway assets, fleet, staff travel, and buildings' heating and electricity. These corporate emissions are estimated to have declined 60% between the baseline year of 2010/11 and 2020/21, from 26,510t CO₂e to about 10,500t CO₂e.</p> <p>Forecasting has shown that, without further action, electricity grid decarbonisation, population changes, and technology uptake would result in approximately a 70% drop from 2010/11 to 2030/31, with 8,000t CO₂e remaining.</p> <p>Having chosen a mitigation strategy, in which offsets will only be considered as a last resort, the council has in place a climate action programme to reduce emissions across all areas of its corporate neutrality target:</p> <p>Highway assets: the streetlighting LED conversion programme, due to be</p>				2010/11	2019/20	Total emissions (t CO₂e)	68,041		Schools becoming academies	-24,002		Grid decarbonisation	-9,609		Corporate disposals	-2,496		New total emissions (t CO₂e)	31,934	19,164	Reduction		39.99%
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	<p>completed in 2025/26, will reduce emissions from 13,273t CO₂e in 2010/11 to an estimated 610t CO₂e by 2030/31.</p> <p>Fleet: OCC has an 'EV by default' fleet replacement policy and is putting in place One Fleet, an integrated fleet management approach that will support fleet rationalisation and decarbonisation. The climate action framework sets out a goal of replacing all cars with EVs by 2024 and all vans by 2028. A detailed fleet replacement programme will be developed this year, which will provide a forecast of emissions reductions to 2030.</p> <p>Staff travel (grey fleet): changes in work practices due to COVID have accelerated progress in this area, delivering in one year the emissions reductions expected by 2024-25. To sustain these changes, a low carbon staff travel programme is being proposed to encourage 'digital by default' meetings and active travel, as well as explore options for promoting the use of EVs for staff travel. The programme will provide a forecast of emissions reductions to 2030.</p> <p>Buildings' heating and electricity: an invest-to-save decarbonisation programme is being developed for the council's corporate buildings, which will provide a forecast of emissions reductions to 2030. Projects recently funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund will deliver a reduction of 205t CO₂e per year, while LED conversion at Park and Ride will deliver a further 19t CO₂e savings per year.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR PETE SADBURY</p> <p>Scope 3 Emissions Accounting:</p> <p>There is a serious problem with both the</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR YVONNE CONSTANCE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Scope 3 emissions: The council's reporting of scope 3 emissions includes:</p>

Questions	Answers
<p>definition and the accounting of "scope 3" emissions, with regard to both the Council's carbon accounting to date and its "Zero by 2030" target.</p> <p>The GHG report 2020 makes no reference whatsoever to the impact of decisions taken by the Council, regarding, for example, road building, active transport, etc. These "value chain" scope 3 emissions are likely to dwarf the magnitude of the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions, plus directly attributable scope 3 emissions, which together amount to the equivalent of building only 300 homes per year. Treating the Council as though it is solely a provider organisation and ignoring its core political function is counter-intuitive, misleading and ignores the huge contribution political decisions can make in both worsening and mitigating the climate crisis.</p> <p>The traditional "oil Company" response to scope 3 emissions is to argue that they are someone else's scope 1 and not relevant (this could be characterised as a "not our problem if they choose to burn it..." defence).</p> <p>However, given that even Oil Companies are now reporting their scope 3 emissions and taking actions to bring them into compliance with Paris / 1.5C, surely it is time for the Council to do the same?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emissions that are part of our carbon neutrality target – grey fleet and electricity transmission and distribution losses in our buildings and highway assets • Emissions that are not part of our carbon neutrality target – highways maintenance contractor's fleet fuel, outsourced data centre servers' electricity consumption, and maintained schools' grey fleet. <p>Although it is not possible to forecast the latter scope 3 emissions, there is ongoing work that will contribute to significant reductions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways management contract: total emissions from the Highways Contract have been calculated at c. 9000t CO₂e for 2018. Required actions for decarbonisation have been identified and are currently being assessed for feasibility of implementation. Materials, depots, highways design, as well as plant and fleet, are all included within the project scope. These emissions are not currently included in scope 3 reporting. • Kennington Bridge replacement scheme: as part of the project, a preliminary carbon assessment has been undertaken, with total emissions from the project (including both temporary and permanent works) calculated at 11112 t CO₂e. A series of high-level recommendations for reducing these emissions have been identified, which require further assessment to determine feasibility. These emissions are not currently included in GHG reporting. • Social value policy: once the policy is in place, carbon emissions savings from the council's supply chain will be tracked for at least 12 months to quantify its potential impact; we are currently looking at the possibility of including a specific emissions weighting in tender

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<p>What were the changes in scope 3 emissions that can be attributed to OCC policies and decisions over the period of the carbon budget reporting (2010-2019) and what changes are projected over the next 1-5 years?</p>	<p>valuations, which would maximise the policy's impact on scope 3 emissions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools: a support package is being prepared to help schools take climate action and reduce their carbon emissions. • Infrastructure schemes: the council is also embedding considerations of climate impact into decisions on infrastructure schemes through a scheme prioritisation tool that assesses alignment with climate strategy. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, currently being reviewed, will also use climate criteria to prioritise future schemes.
<p>3. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</p> <p>At the meeting on the County Council on 11th July 2017 you provided me with details of damages paid by the County Council over the preceding four-year period. In your answer you alluded to the fact that there remained some £10.4 million in open claims from earlier years still to be settled.</p> <p>Can you please provide the figures by Directorate for the current position with these outstanding claims mentioned in your answer of 2017, indicating the size of any amount still set aside for open claims and the amount spent in damages and legal costs by this Council in settling the claims, together with the amount of any sums not required from the £10.4 million estimate in your answer of 11th July 2017?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>The provision of £10.4m, calculated at the balance sheet date of 31 March 2017, was made up of two parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £5.6m – the estimated value of outstanding claims received at 31 March 2017 • £4.8m – an actuarial valuation of potential claims relating to previous years that could be received in the future (i.e. the liability has been incurred but the claim has not been received) <p>Since April 2017, £2.1m has been paid out in respect of claims received at 31 March 2017. These figures are inclusive of the amounts spent in damages and legal costs. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of this information by Directorate.</p> <p>The provision is recalculated at the end of each financial year. The equivalent figures at 31 March 2020 were:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £4.0m – estimated value of outstanding claims received at 31 March 2020 • £4.1m - an actuarial valuation of potential claims relating to previous years that could be received in the future <p>Within the known figure of £4.0m there are 17 claims still outstanding that were included in the estimate of £5.6m at 31 March 2017. The current outstanding estimate for these claims is £1.3m.</p> <p>Therefore, the 2017 provision of £5.6m overprovided for known claims by £2.2m.</p> <p>The actuary is in the process of calculating the provision at 31 March 2021 and this information will be included in 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.</p>
<p>4. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</p> <p>On the 4th March this year I emailed you about the failure to repair or replace the rising bollard on Aristotle Lane in my division. In your reply, you stated that ‘Between us (<i>yourself and officers</i>), we will come back to you with a response.’</p> <p>Officers and cabinet members are not unaware of this matter, as I both Cllr Buckley and I have raised it in public on several occasions. As this was the original ‘safe street’ precaution, it is ironic that the problem has taken so long to resolve.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR YVONNE CONSTANCE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>I am sorry you have not been kept informed of progress. I have asked officers to make sure they do this in the future.</p> <p>Officers have been working with the supplier to get the replacement rising bollards to an operational state. The bollards are functioning, but require CCTV and ANPR for systems to work to be operational. The supplier has stated that there is insufficient broadband width to allow the cameras and ANPR system to operate correctly. We are checking this to ensure that this conclusion is correct. We are currently upgrading the broadband line at the Cornmarket bollard and this work should be completed in April. If this resolves the connectivity issues, then we will roll out broadband upgrades across all the other sites as soon as possible. We are also exploring, directly with the camera supplier, using a higher spec camera to see if this will also aid the</p>

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<p>In view of the motion about 'safe streets' passed at the County Council meeting last week, can you explain why I have still not had a response saying when this issue will be fixed after so long?</p>	<p>system.</p> <p>We believed that we would be able to operate a limited service, operating the bollards without ANPR recognition, but testing of the system has revealed that we cannot get reliable picture feeds to see who is at the bollard, so that we can raise and lower the bollard safely remotely. This is incredibly frustrating for both myself and the Officers working on the project but we continue to work towards a solution. I have asked officers to look into the practicalities of temporarily operating the Aristotle Lane bollard manually on site and will update you on this potential temporary measure.</p>
<p>5. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER</p> <p>There have been several reports in the Oxford Times about the "Expressway by Stealth". Irrespective of any role in the Expressway, responses to recent FOI requests indicate that changes were made to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan at a late stage on the initiative of County Council officers - in particular the addition of a proposal to "improve" the B4015, the removal of the safeguarding plan for Stadhampton Bypass and the inclusion of possible M40 junction changes outside the District which together with other local plan road proposals gives support to the suspicion that a major new route through our area is being planned. In any event, the proposed improvement of the B4015, 2 miles long country lane, would have drastic effects environmentally. Apparently, this has not been the subject of any public consultation or discussion by members of</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR YVONNE CONSTANCE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Responses are set against individual questions below:</p>

Questions	Answers
<p>this authority.</p> <p>As these late changes to the Local Plan were initiated by officers of the County Council as highway authority could you please answer the following questions:</p> <p>Q1. Could the CC provide an explanation; indicating what assessments of the costs, traffic and environmental impacts along the road itself and along its feeder routes, especially the A239 to the east and at the M40, it has undertaken before proposing the B4015 Improvement be included in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan ?</p>	<p>Comments regarding improvements to the B4015 between A4074 and B480 were included in the April 2020 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) following an e-mail from OCC on 12th December responding to a request from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for an update to their IDP. The B4015 between A4074 and B480 is the road between Golden Balls Roundabout and Chislehampton; both of which are separately proposed for potential improvement.</p> <p>Given the above and the fact that there was significant strategic housing development proposed that would impact on this part of the network, officers identified that there may be a need to improve this section of road and SODC was notified accordingly. There are no designs, costings or feasibility studies for any works. SODC chose to include this section of highway network in the IDP, noting that it is subject to change, depending on the Transport Assessments accompanying planning applications.</p> <p>Improvements to this length of OCC highway network are not included in the OCC strategic transport planning policy and the M40 junction improvements included within the district council's IDP were not proposed by OCC. Highways England and Homes England (as developer of strategic housing allocation at Chalgrove) made proposals to include these junctions in the IDP. The district council (SODC) subsequently drafted and added text to the IDP referencing junctions 8,8A,9 &10.</p>
<p>Q 2. Can you indicate whether there has been or</p>	<p>Any proposed changes or improvements to the B4015 between A4074 and</p>

Questions	Answers
<p>will be any public consultation on the individual proposals and on the effective creation of a major route linking the two strategic routes; A34 and M40 and the consequential wider network implications?</p>	<p>B480, would likely come forward, as noted above through planning application Transport Assessments, if either are proposed by an applicant or requested by OCC. Consultation and comment opportunity will then be possible through the normal planning process. As noted above, to date there are no specific proposals for improvements to this section of carriageway proposed.</p> <p>There is no proposal either within the current Local Transport Plan or the emerging Local Transport & Connectivity Plan for the creation of a strategic link between the A34 and the M40. Highways England is leading a study looking at potential improvements to the A34, but this is in its early stages and does not include any specific outcomes or proposals, which may emerge over time</p> <p>The SODC IDP is a document setting out the infrastructure required to support the local plan. This is a live document and subject to change through the life of a Local Plan. The IDP is not a document that sets out strategic highway network aspirations. Any highway related elements included in the Local Plan IDP are there to support the plans delivery.</p>