

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 19 December 2019  
**Report of:** Transition Director  
**Title of Report:** Initial response to Report on Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To formally welcome the Final Report on Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change established by Oxford City Council, approve an initial response, and lay out the next steps to become a Zero Carbon Council and city.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Tom Hayes, Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Clean and Green Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Sustainability Strategy 2011-2020
<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Formally welcome</b> the Final Report on Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change established by Oxford City Council;</li> <li>2. <b>Formally welcome</b> the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report which underpinned the Citizens' Assembly, commissioned from Oxford-based environmental consultancy Anthesis;</li> <li>3. <b>Agree</b> an immediate response to the Citizens' Assembly Final Report, including measures in the budget for 2020/21;</li> <li>4. In line with the findings of Oxford's Citizens' Assembly, <b>agree</b> steps to reduce the City Council's carbon footprint – that is, the Council's direct operations, where it pays the bills – to net zero by the end of 2020, initially through the purchase of renewable electricity and gas and offsetting and then through an acceleration of existing and new programmes to reduce the Council's underlying emissions;</li> <li>5. <b>Request</b> that officers develop detailed plans for further projects to accelerate the reduction in the Council's underlying emissions to achieve a Zero Carbon Council by 2030 or sooner; and</li> <li>6. <b>Request</b> the reinvention of the Low Carbon Oxford Partnership as the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership. Convened by the City Council, this new Partnership will galvanise emitters in the city to agree targets and an action plan for Oxford to become a zero-carbon city.</li> </ol>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Existing City Council expenditure and planned and leveraged investments in carbon reduction measures

**Introduction**

1. In January 2019, Oxford City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency in Oxford and agreed to create a Citizens’ Assembly in the city to help consider new carbon targets and additional measures to reduce emissions. In April 2019, the Council set a vision to reduce its own emissions to net zero by 2030 at the latest, sooner than the Government’s deadline of 2050 under the amended Climate Change Act (2008). And, during September and October 2019, Oxford became the first city in the country to hold a Citizens’ Assembly to address the issue of climate change and consider the measures that could be taken here and the implications for the city, communities and individuals.
2. This report sets out the headline findings of the Citizens’ Assembly and the Council’s initial response to its recommendations. This includes an immediate commitment to over £1 million of additional revenue funding and £18 million of capital funding through the current Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy process to support the Council’s response to the climate emergency. This comes on top of around £84 million of ongoing investment in a range of measures to address climate change across Oxford and the wider county that has already been leveraged through the City Council’s partnerships with others.
3. This report also sets, sets out significant work programmes covering all areas of Council activity, powers and influence – to convene, engage, inform, and lobby others - to help deliver a zero carbon future for Oxford.
4. Oxford City Council itself is responsible for around 1% of the city’s greenhouse gas emissions - and in addition this report sets out recommendations on how the Council can reduce its own carbon footprint to net zero. It is proposed this will be achieved in 2020 through the purchase of renewable electricity and gas and offsetting, while at the same time accelerating the Council’s ongoing programme of measures to reduce its underlying emissions to net zero by 2030 or sooner.
5. These initial responses to the Citizens’ Assembly are additional to what is already one of the most advanced and comprehensive environmental sustainability programmes of any local authority in the UK. Oxford City Council already commits around £0.75 million in annual resource to the overall Environmental Sustainability programme, with around £84 million of current external grant funding for low carbon measures in the city and the wider county the Council helped secure. A breakdown

of the Council's existing carbon reduction and associated programmes is in **Appendix 1**.

6. As the Citizens' Assembly recognised, Oxford City Council alone cannot fund and undertake all of the work needed to make Oxford a zero carbon city. Additional sources of funding will be needed in addition to the £18 million of new capital investment the Council has already help secure to support decarbonisation measures in Oxford over the next 4 years. This additional funding will include Government grants, investment by businesses and individual households, and fundraising by community groups. In addition to playing its own part, the City Council will ensure Oxford is well positioned to secure the increased funding for responding to climate change which has already been signalled by Government.
7. Through all of its ambitious plans and actions the City Council will also have full regard to the concerns clearly expressed by both councillors and Assembly Members that the programme to cut carbon emissions in Oxford neither disadvantages low-income households in the city or sacrifices residents' standard of living. In fact, the City Council has an opportunity to enhance residents' standard of living, especially those who are most vulnerable and have low-incomes, through its climate action

## **Background**

8. The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report warned that the current global target of 80% cut in carbon emissions by 2050 is not enough to avert catastrophic temperature change. Leading scientists, including those who took part in Oxford's Citizens' Assembly, say it's essential that our global temperature change must be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius and that rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society are required to ensure this.
9. In mid-2019 the UK legislated to cut emissions to net zero by 2050. The previous target of a reduction of 80% by 2050 in the 2008 Climate Change Act, has been amended to net-zero emissions by 2050. This Council operates within this new framework established by the UK Parliament.
10. In common with many local authorities across the country, Oxford City Council declared a climate emergency at the start of 2019. As part of its commitment to tackle this, the Council decided to act quickly and become the first local authority in the country to call a Citizens' Assembly. As a result, Oxford became the first city in the country to hold a Citizens' Assembly to address the issue of climate change and consider the measures that could be taken here and the implications for the city, communities and individuals.
11. A Citizens' Assembly is a group of people who are brought together to discuss an issue or issues and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen. The people who take part are chosen so they reflect the wider population – in terms of demographics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, social class, postcode). The specific promise to establish a Citizens' Assembly in order to involve the wider population of Oxford in the process has reinforced the Council's intention to make this a community wide process, and not just a Council project.

## Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change 2019

12. Ipsos MORI was commissioned to conduct the Citizens' Assembly and recruited a representative sample of 50 Oxford residents to learn about climate change and explore different options to cut carbon emissions. A combination of presentations from 27 experts set out the scale of the issue and the range of options to address climate change and biodiversity. Of the recruited Assembly Members, 42 attended both weekend sessions and created a 'mini-public' representative of the demographics of the city's population.
13. Informing the five topic areas chosen for consideration by the Citizens' Assembly and to support its work, the Council commissioned new research to understand the breakdown of carbon emissions in Oxford. The new assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions generated across sectors of the city was published in the City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report, commissioned by the Council from Anthesis. Reference:  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/1100/climate\\_emergency\\_strategy\\_support\\_report\\_2019](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/1100/climate_emergency_strategy_support_report_2019)
14. Assembly Members attended two full weekends of deliberation and discussion over the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September and the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and focused upon five key areas relating to emissions in Oxford: waste reduction, buildings, transport, biodiversity & offsetting, and renewable energy. To help understand and deliberate on the issues, members listened to expert presentations, had question and answer sessions with experts, discussed issues with fellow members in breakout sessions and larger plenary sessions, took part in creative exercises, and voted on questions.
15. For each theme, members were presented with three visions of possible futures for Oxford – ranging from least ambitious to most ambitious – and the potential benefits and trade-offs associated with each scenario. Members were asked to vote on which of the future scenarios they would like to live in - and taking account of the co-benefits and trade-offs preferred the most ambitious scenario. At the end of the process Assembly Members were asked to vote on the question: "*The UK has legislation to reach 'net zero' by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050?*" Thirty seven out of 41 of the Assembly Members said 'yes'.
16. A detailed report on the findings of Oxford's Citizens Assembly on Climate Change, has been produced by the experts at Ipsos MORI who independently facilitated the Assembly on behalf of the City Council. Reference:  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6871/oxford\\_citizens\\_assembly\\_on\\_climate\\_change\\_report\\_-\\_november\\_2019](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6871/oxford_citizens_assembly_on_climate_change_report_-_november_2019) Assembly Members have expressed their level of ambition for taking forward carbon-reduction measures across the city and the Council across five themes: buildings, transport, waste, renewable energy, and biodiversity and offsetting. This Cabinet report responds to the headline findings of the Assembly by including proposals which can be implemented immediately.

## **Headline findings from the Citizens' Assembly report**

17. The Citizens' Assembly agreed a comprehensive set of key messages that can be taken into homes, neighbourhoods, partners, and the Council across Oxford. It has demonstrated the role that residents from all walks of life can play in developing a local approach to tackling the climate crisis. The key messages of the Executive Summary of the Final Report of Oxford's Citizens' Assembly are as follows:

- a. The majority of Assembly Members (37 out of 41) felt that Oxford should aim to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050. However, even among those who agreed with this, there was little consensus on when Oxford should aim to reach 'net zero' instead. Assembly Members felt that rapid action was required, that the speed of action depended on the area under consideration, and that interim targets would help measure progress. The Council is examining how this can be achieved using carbon budgets at a local level and will outline thinking around this issue in the Council's new Sustainability Strategy in early 2020
- b. Assembly Members were very aware of the scale of the problem and the need for change. Both the scale and the need for change were greater than they had anticipated before the Assembly, yet what they heard – from experts and from fellow Assembly Members – encouraged them that change was possible.
- c. When imagining a 'net zero' Oxford, Assembly Members envisioned Oxford as a leader in tackling the climate crisis. In achieving this, the most important aspect for Assembly Members was that Oxford would be a more liveable city, with better communities, and happier, healthier people – without sacrificing residents' standard of living. Assembly Members found a great deal of encouragement in the examples of what is already being done across Oxford to address climate change and meet the goal of becoming 'net zero'. There was limited awareness of this activity among Assembly Members, however it gave a sense of what could be done – which helped counter the fear that things have gone too far already or that the scale of the challenge makes reaching 'net zero' an intractable problem.
- d. Enhanced biodiversity was central to the overall 'net zero' vision of Oxford with increased flora and fauna in the city centre, along with more cycling, walking, and public transport, and far fewer cars.
- e. The buildings sector should adopt improved building standards, widespread retrofitting, and more domestic and non-domestic energy needs being met by sustainable sources. Assembly members' could see no sense at all in new buildings not reaching the desired standards now, being faced with expensive retrofits in the future.
- f. A significant minority, around one in four to one in three Assembly Members rejected the most ambitious - and, therefore, challenging to achieve - visions of a future Oxford. For these Assembly Members, the most ambitious scenario typically felt impractical, unrealistic, and represented too great a challenge to their current lifestyles. The report advised that bringing these more sceptical or reluctant citizens with the Council will be vital to meeting the 'net zero'

challenge.

- g. Members were perturbed by the extent to which the burden of change was - in their eyes - being placed on individuals. They sought to know what large businesses and government were doing to change their ways – and, in the latter case, to support individuals and communities to meet ‘net zero’. Related to this, there were many questions about how changes – new heating systems, retrofitted homes, solar panels – would be paid for.
- h. There was a lack of awareness among members about some of the initiatives that were already taking place in Oxford such as the share and repair cafes and shops. Some of the communications should help to raise awareness of these to increase usage. There was a sense that the Council needs to invest in a strong capacity to communicate a shared vision and strategy to reaching ‘net zero’ that shows the roles played by local and national government, businesses, and individuals. Members felt communications should be accessible and proactively pushed to residents rather than relying on them to search out information.
- i. Assembly Members understood the complexity of the issues under discussion and asked for holistic and long term solutions to be considered. They valued the various co-benefits of a ‘net zero’ Oxford vision and felt it was important for the Council to communicate about these clearly to the public to encourage change for reasons that are personally or socially beneficial as well as to solve the climate emergency.
- j. Specifically, members wanted more information about how to recycle correctly. Recycling, reducing, and re-using waste were important goals for Assembly Members. They felt that individuals and organisations should be encouraged to consume and produce less, respectively. Yet there was confusion over how recycling currently works in Oxford. Assembly Members demanded more education and information in order to ensure households recycled effectively.

### **City Council initial response to the Citizens Assembly recommendations**

- 18. As a democratically elected body, Oxford City Council has a duty to become zero carbon in its operations, landholdings, and other activities. Direct action covers a range of areas and, in response to the findings of Oxford’s Citizens’ Assembly, the Council is targeting limited resources into the areas where it can achieve large gains in carbon reduction.
- 19. The first Council Budget to follow Oxford’s climate emergency declaration includes new provisions to enable the Council to build on the significant work already underway to reduce its own carbon reductions and support the decarbonisation of the city.
- 20. The initial proposed response to Oxford’s Citizens’ Assembly amounts to an extra £1,040,000 over 4 years. This is significant in the Council’s Budget context and details are set out in the Budget report. This new funding is additional to the very significant existing operational and planned capital investments by the Council – which totals around £17 million over the same period. This is one of the most advanced and comprehensive environmental sustainability programmes of any

local authority in the UK. Enabling this additional funding involves some difficult choices as the total amount of possible Council spending is capped by the Government.

21. Underpinning its extra expenditure, the Council will extend consideration of carbon impacts to all areas of its activity and policy making. Everything the Council does must be seen through the lens of tackling the climate emergency in a way that promotes fairness and equity. The increase in overall spend is capped by various mechanisms outside of the Council's control but work will be supplemented by redirecting existing budgets to achieve desired environmental outcomes (for example building homes and operational buildings to net zero standards).
22. At this stage, three areas for action can be identified as immediately arising from the Assembly in addition to the continuation and acceleration of the Council's existing work to support Oxford becoming a Zero Carbon City at the earliest opportunity.
  - a. **Putting people at the heart of the response by the city and its Council**  
One of the key messages from the Citizens' Assembly was the need to bring everyone in the city up to a similar level of understanding and engagement to that achieved by Assembly Members. It is felt that this is crucial if the city is to be sufficiently bold, progressive and proactive to meet the aspirations of the Assembly. The enhanced budget will bolster existing engagement and communications activities across the Council and provide a clear climate change focus.
  - b. **Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership and Targets**  
The existing Low Carbon Partnership has served the city well, contributing to the city meeting the existing target of a 40% reduction in greenhouse emissions across the city by 2020. However, widespread recognition of a climate emergency signals a need to reinvent that partnership and give it new energy, to agree interim carbon budget targets for the city, and to galvanise action across large scale emitters to achieve them.
  - c. **Creating a net Zero Carbon Council in 2020**  
The Council will aim to be net zero carbon, for its direct activities - ie where it pays the bill - by the procurement of renewable energy and offsetting where this is not currently feasible. In addition the Council is reviewing programmes to electrify its fleet and reduce energy usage in its operational buildings and will share revised proposals during 2020 to reduce the need to rely on offsetting and reduce the total amount of energy consumed, the process of improving the Council's operational buildings and conversion of the Council's fleet to electric will be accelerated
23. In the New Year, the findings of the Citizens' Assembly will feed into the Council's Sustainability Strategy. This Strategy will include a detailed Action Plan to determine how the Council plays its part in meeting the challenge.

### **Citizens' Assembly's themes and commentary on the Council's Position**

24. The Council's current activities and programmes are based on the previous policy position of achieving a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, agreed in partnership with Low Carbon Oxford members. Clearly in light of the

climate emergency, these need to be reviewed and updated as part of the reinvention of a Zero Carbon Oxford. An initial “stock take” across the entire range of Council activities is under way. The opening set of interim findings will report in the first half of 2020-21 financial year and will inform revisions to existing policy positions. Detailed work will then be undertaken to take the immediate responses to the Citizens’ Assembly outlined here to the next level, proposing new activities and programmes to deliver a net zero Council and city.

## **Buildings**

25. The City Council’s Climate Emergency Strategy Support report found that 81% of the total emissions in Oxford come from buildings. Residential buildings are the largest contributor to emissions at 29% of Oxford’s total emissions and institutional buildings are the second largest contributor to carbon emissions in Oxford at 26% of total emissions, with the University of Oxford generating more emissions than any other individual organisation in the city, responsible for 8% of the total. Oxford City Council accounts for approximately 1% of total emissions in the city.
26. Cleaning up the electricity the Council consumes is central to the its commitment to reducing carbon emissions and fighting global warming. The Council currently procures certified green electricity to meet its needs, in addition to meeting 10% of demand by generating electricity from solar panels installed on its buildings.
27. Industrial buildings which are involved in the manufacturing of products in Oxford are responsible for 17% of Oxford’s total carbon emissions. Commercial buildings and facilities are responsible for 9% of Oxford’s total carbon emissions.
28. Assembly Members found it surprising that the largest proportion of emissions came from buildings. A mix of developers, private landlords, individuals, Oxford City Council and central government were felt to be primarily responsible for reducing carbon emissions in buildings. There was a perceived need for a balanced approach to decreasing emissions from buildings while simultaneously working to resolve the current affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford.
29. Current and future development of a zero carbon building system include:
  - a. **Council buildings** - From October 2020 the Council will procure all its gas requirements from certified renewable gas producers. A new contract will also be agreed for the provision of green electricity, and carbon offsets will be purchased to cover the Council’s remaining emissions - most obviously arising from fuel for vehicles. The offsets will be linked to certified sustainable tree planting in south east England. The Budget for 2020/21 provides for these additional costs.

Oxford City Council is provided with 50% match funding under the Salix programme to develop energy efficiency projects across our own estate and operations. This acts as a revolving loan fund of circa £1M to meet an annual carbon reduction target of 5% through installed measures within a ten year payback period. Proposals for SALIX+, an additional fund within the City Council that would act as a revolving loan fund where extended payback



periods of above ten years are needed to deliver energy efficiency or renewable energy projects, are being considered.

- b. **Retrofit Council housing** - Building on years of data collection, primarily using the Council's own records, updates from programmes of improvement works and Energy Performance Certificates, the Council is currently at the data validation stage of an assessment of how the housing stock is performing for energy efficiency. This is expected to be completed in mid-2020.

The Council recently completed a whole stock modelling exercise which indicates that overall the bulk of the housing stock is performing well with 93.6% returning an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or above which indicates that the vast majority of our stock performs at current average or above with regard to energy efficiency.

To date the Council has given priority to investment projects to improve energy efficiency with extensive programmes of cavity wall and solid wall insulation installations and also solar PV installation programmes. There is a continuing programme of heating upgrades and loft insulation to set minimum standards for our homes.

The Council's aim was to get all homes to a C in their EPC where this is feasible. However, following the declaration of a climate emergency and Citizens' Assembly the Council is committed to further improving the energy efficiency of council housing. Once the stock assessment has concluded in mid-2020, proposals will be put forward for the additional investment to deliver greater carbon reduction of council housing, prioritising the worst performing first.

Regrettably, it is evident that for a proportion of the existing stock, retrofitting may not be economically viable, with replacement the preferred and sometimes only option. In the absence of substantial external investment by Government, the current legislation requires that the costs of the retrofit and replacement programme would be borne by the tenants of the Councils' stock. The relative weight attached to the council housing retrofit work will need to be balanced against the volume and affordability of new housing delivery, services for tenants, and other regeneration objectives funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

Reflecting concerns expressed by the Administration and Assembly Members, the Council is committed to ensuring its plans, while ambitious, do not place an unfair burden on tenants, who are often those on lowest incomes in our society. Of course, a retrofit investment programme for our council housing would be subject to formal consultation with tenants.

- c. **New build homes** – The City Council's wholly-owned housing company Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) is developing a business plan that includes provision for progressing all new build to above Part L of Building Regulation standard and without gas heating. This will be completed by the end of the current 2019-20 financial year. A fabric-first approach which incorporates appropriate renewable sources of energy will be taken to ensure reduced

carbon emissions. In addition, the Council will seek to bring forward some demonstration net zero or Passivhaus homes, to build capability and generate local interest. In time, as acceptance of Passivhaus homes among tenants and buyers increases, and the incrementally higher costs of this form of housing narrows, it is anticipated that this will be the norm for OCHL construction. The Council will develop our understanding of this journey and potential timetable.

- d. **Community buildings** – As part of a wider review of the City Council’s non-housing buildings, a full audit of all its community assets is underway that includes an appraisal of their energy efficiency. A further assessment is set to be commissioned to identify options and costs for retrofitting. This assessment is expected to complete in September 2020. This audit will underpin an investment prioritisation exercise which draws on costed plans for improving the energy efficiency and carbon reduction of community buildings. It will form part of a wider assessment of all of the City Council’s non-housing assets.

All new City Council buildings will draw on best practice examples such as Rose Hill Community Centre, which now also has a One Planet Living Action Plan. From January 2019, current Building Regulations for new buildings occupied by public authorities require nearly zero-energy building, and the planned upgrading of the East Oxford Community Centre and Bullingdon Community Centres, including newly constructed buildings, are working to these targets. Going forwards, for all new-build community building projects the Council will explore the costs and practicalities of delivering net zero energy schemes as part of the feasibility process.

- e. **Commercial buildings** – In respect of commercial buildings the Council will, in the main, have to rely on partnerships with other freehold landlords in the city and working with leaseholders – many of whom are on long leases - to create an environment where all are ready to take advantage of any grant or demonstration funding and to respond to any new legislation. The Council will also review lease conditions for new leases. Proposals are under consultation with central government for a preferred trajectory of minimum standards of non-domestic Private Rental Sector to rise from an E to a B by 2030, providing the measures are cost effective.

Work to ensure the City Council has an adequate stock condition survey for its commercial investment portfolio will start in February 2020. This work will look to provide costs for all identified maintenance and repairs, alongside retrofitting to improve energy efficiency. It will then form part of the wider assessment for prioritising investment in planned and preventative maintenance and energy efficiency measures across the City Council’s non-housing assets. An interim report will be produced in September 2020 based on the result of the work on priority buildings. The final report is expected in February 2021. This work will inform future Council capital budget prioritisation from 2021/22, as well as supporting the identification of external funding opportunities.

For all new commercial property acquisitions where the Council is considering purchasing new buildings, these will need to be constructed to BREEAM (Buildings Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) standard Outstanding, Excellent or Very Good or equivalent standards of

energy efficiency. Where existing in-use buildings are being considered for purchase officers propose to look at cost-effective ways of improving the environmental performance of these assets as part of the investment case.

- f. **Private rented sector** – the private rented sector is a mixed picture with some of the best but also the worst domestic premises in the city. The City Council has been proactive in this area through its licensing and enforcement programmes, such as are permitted by current legislation and project funding. The Council will lobby government to raise standards in this significant area of housing in the city and remain proactive in the enforcement of minimum standards across the private rented sector and seek demonstration projects funded by central government.
- g. **Planning** –The Council has sought to put environmental sustainability alongside the need for new housing at the centre of the emerging Local Plan. This will introduce standards for new buildings in the city which are at the upper limits of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council will continue to push for high standards at the forthcoming public enquiry to its plan. The Council will present the views of the Citizens’ Assembly to support our challenging, but we believe deliverable, proposals.
- h. **Building standards** 100% of Assembly Members voted in favour of Government changing national policy to require that all new homes are built to net zero standards. Oxford City Council will continue to make decisions locally whilst actively lobbying in support of a change that would cut future carbon emissions and remove the current cost differential between standard build and net zero build. It will respond to the Government’s Future Homes Standard consultation in line with the responses submitted by the Good Homes Alliance or the Association of Environment Conscious Building.

## Transport

- 30. The City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report found that transport accounts for 17% of Oxford's total emissions. This is broken into two sub categories, on-road and rail emissions. Oxfordshire County Council is the Local Transport Authority. In 2011 there were over 100,000 average daily commuter trips, as reported in the Oxford Transport Strategy, with subcategories published by the Office for National Statistics. Upwards of 190 buses and coaches enter the city per hour at peak times. Emissions from rail are significantly lower, yet In 2017/18 there were a total of around 8 million rail passengers through Oxford Railway Station. The Council will continue to support the electrification of the rail network, with particular reference to the extension of electrification of the western region to Oxford and beyond.
- 31. The Citizens’ Assembly believed encouraging behaviour change with a shift away from private car ownership and use was key. It was recognised this required significant improvement in infrastructure, including better bus connectivity and more and safer cycling routes. Technological change, with increased take-up of electric vehicles as well as new smart options for car shares/pools was also important. At the same time there were concerns about how vulnerable groups - especially children and the elderly – will be able to get about when encouraging a move away

from cars.

32. Current and future development of a zero carbon transport system include:

- a. **City Council fleet** - The Council's wholly-owned direct services company, Oxford Direct Services (ODS) has a total fleet of around 330 vehicles, which already includes 23 operational fully electric vehicles. The ODS business plan commits the company to electrifying at least 25% by 2023. This programme of electrification aims to ensure that the company can operate a Zero Emissions Zone compliant fleet. In addition the company has undertaken a fleet migration study in order to assess the suitability of all of its vehicles for electrification and to inform the development of a strategy to move to a completely zero emissions fleet: subject to the time-frame for specialist vehicles such as refuse trucks becoming available in the market.

To underpin the rapid shift of its whole fleet to zero carbon, ODS is working in partnership with Pivot Power, the company leading the £40 million Energy Superhub Oxford project (ESO). ESO is a new smart local energy system – or 'smart grid' – that will enable superfast charging of vehicles at its depot.

- b. **Electric vehicle take-up and charging infrastructure** – Oxford City Council has secured funding for the implementation of around 400 electric vehicle charging points across the city, as well as trialling pop-up charger technology. Wider implementation will require additional funding, and could be underpinned by the £40 million Project Leo smart grid, being developed in the city with partners. The Council also partners the annual EV Summit in Oxford that brings together global businesses working on electric vehicles, energy, information technology and charging infrastructure, to explore how the Council can advance eMobility.
- c. **Electric buses and taxis** – Oxford City Council has secured funding to bring the first electric buses to Oxford, and reached agreement with bus operators that all buses within the city will be zero emission capable by 2035. The Council has also set new licensing standards for taxi which will require all taxis licensed in Oxford to be zero emission capable by 2025 and, through our electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other support, we are incentivising the Black Cab fleet to be zero-emission capable
- d. **Zero Emissions Zone** – Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council are working in partnership to introduce a zero emission zone from 2020 in the city centre which aims to cover the whole city by 2035. Next month the Council will be setting out the final proposals for implementation of the first phase.
- e. **Connecting Oxford** – Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council are working in partnership to develop proposals for a work place parking levy and access restrictions which aims to reduce congestion and improve walking, cycling and public transport facilities. These proposals are expected to reduce traffic volumes in parts of Oxford by up to 40%, so cutting carbon emissions within the city.
- f. **Vehicle standards and scrappage scheme** – The Government has already legislated to end the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040.

Assembly Members supported bringing this forward to 2030. Oxford City Council will actively lobby in support of such a change that would significantly accelerate the take up of zero emissions vehicles. It has produced a Charter for Cleaner Air in collaboration with Friends of the Earth England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and Greenpeace UK which calls for this and other actions.

- g. **Cycling** – the City Council continues to invest in the provision of extra cycle parking in the city and it is working with Oxfordshire County Council to develop a full investment proposal for Government to fund the creation of cycle greenways into the city. This was proposed by the National Infrastructure Commission report *Running out of Road*. Reference: <https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf> infrastructure. The Council is also promoting the take-up of ebikes, with an ebike summit hosted in the city.

## **Biodiversity**

33. Assembly Members were particularly engaged in considering the sort of city that they wanted for themselves and future generations. There is strong resonance between their preferred descriptions of the future and the Oxford 2050 Vision which was developed by the Council in 2018, following extensive public engagement. The theme of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and “greening” the city was seen as a key route to engagement with communities and individuals.
34. The Council is already engaged in this area through the planning process and green space management. In response to the climate emergency declaration, a thorough review will be required to meet the aspirations of the Citizens’ Assembly. The Council is exploring using a Natural Resource Management methodology to reset its approach to biodiversity management in the city. This will require working with partners to develop a Natural Capital and Ecosystem Service assessment of Oxford to understand how we maximise the benefits of nature and guide policy and decision-making in future.
35. Current and future development of biodiversity and green spaces include:
  - a. **Biodiversity Strategy, Urban Forest Assessment**, and plan for land management in the ownership of the City Council to be published before the end of the current 2019-20 financial year
  - b. **Green Spaces Strategy** which guides decisions about the protection of green spaces and the provision of new spaces
  - c. **Waterways** – developing plans with other stakeholders to maximise the natural resource benefits from the waterways within the city
  - d. **Planning policies** which seek to ensure that developments deliver a net gain in biodiversity
  - e. **Tree planting** - Oxford City Council has planted over 5000 new trees on its land (mainly parks and nature areas) in the last five years, and as part of this year’s Tree Week scheme will have planted another 2000
  - f. **Conservation and management** of 900 acres of nature reserves
  - g. **Working with voluntary groups** who care for the environment

New areas of activity to be explored going forward include

- a. Supporting the potential formation of a countywide **Local Nature Partnership**
- b. Applying a **Natural Resource Management** approach to decision making requiring a detailed mapping of natural resources that the city derives services from and impacts upon
- c. Enhancing **engagement with local voluntary action groups** active in the fields of nature conservation and biodiversity
- d. Linking this work to development of **locally based offsetting schemes**.

## Offsetting

36. The City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report found that some emissions are going to be really hard to remove. Getting the city anywhere near carbon neutral is going to be incredibly challenging. Current assumptions indicate that some sources of emissions are likely to remain in the energy system at 2050. These are predominantly from freight and industry, where, despite significant energy reductions from efficiency improvements and electrification, some residual emissions still exist. There is some caution about the use of offsets, particularly around any displacement or 'lower ambition' for carbon reduction. The Council will ensure offsets are used only in addition to other actions. Offsetting may however, present Oxford some wider socio-economic opportunities as the city seeks to mobilise and implement the full extent of measures directly 'in-boundary', as a first priority.

- a. **City Council offsetting** - Where offsetting is utilised it is widely held that best practice is that it should be as physically close as possible to the source and there should be a degree of direct control over the scheme for the organisation utilizing them. In view of this the Council will explore the potential for a locally based offsetting scheme, based on the natural capital resource management principles identified above and linked in to our biodiversity programmes.

## Recycling and Waste

37. The City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report found Oxford's waste treatment accounts for under 2% of Oxford's footprint. The city's solid waste treatment has three main components – energy recovery, landfill and recycling. It is important to note that there are other emissions associated with waste, including; transport emissions from waste collection and embodied carbon within the goods consumed then disposed of. Most non-recyclable rubbish goes to Ardley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF), which diverts at least 95% of non-recyclable rubbish from landfill. The City of Oxford's domestic recycling rate is just above 50%--a rate that is widely recognised to be exceptional in light of the transient population of the city and the high number of students living here who need recycling education.

38. Recycling, reducing, and re-using waste were important goals for Assembly Members. They felt that individuals and organisations should be encouraged to consume and produce less, respectively. Yet there was some confusion over how recycling currently works in Oxford and Assembly Members requested more education and information in order to ensure households recycled effectively.

- a. **City Council waste** - Projects are ongoing to reduce water usage and increase recycling of waste arising from the Council's own office accommodation and operations and eliminate waste to landfill.
- b. **Recycling target** – Oxford city's recycling performance is one of the best in the country for a city, when compared with near neighbours; and Oxfordshire's is the best in England. Oxford City Council works with other Districts and the County Council to deliver an Oxfordshire-wide Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). The City Council is helping resource a revitalised countywide Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership to drive behaviour change around waste reduction and recycling. Some targets in the JMWMS are aspirational and may be challenging to achieve. Its overarching aims are:
  - i. Keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year)
  - ii. Increase the amount of household waste we recycle to 70% by 2030
  - iii. Send less than 3% of our household rubbish to landfill by 2020
- c. **Public information** – The Budget for 2020/21 provides for expenditure on the Council's dedicated communications about recycling. As set out above an early target of our new engagement programme will be around waste reduction and recycling, responding to the comments made at the Assembly. A zero-waste festival, trialled in 2019, will also return on an expanded scale in 2020 to allow residents to give their clothes and household goods a new lease of life, whilst saving money and helping the planet. The festival will have a repair café (where one item can be brought for skilled volunteers to fix it), a clothes swish (where unwanted good quality clothing and accessories can be swapped by residents for things they want), a swap shop (where unwanted items in good condition can be swapped) and an upcycling offer.

## Renewable energy

- 39. The City Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support report found that there was scope across the city to further increase the use of renewable energy across domestic and commercial buildings in both existing and new build.
- 40. The Citizens' Assembly was surprised by how much Oxford has already done in this area. There was strong support for national government and the Council playing a more direct role in helping households make the transition away from gas and to new sources of power. However, there were concerns about the affordability of solar panels. Assembly Members were open to compromise in deciding where renewable sources would be placed – neutralising climate change was ultimately seen as more important than the aesthetics of Oxford's skyline.
  - a. **City Council renewables installation** - From December 2019, Oxford City Council will have completed the installation of one of the UK's largest solar carports at the city's Pool and Leisure Centre in Blackbird Leys. A canopy over 48 car-parking spaces will deliver up to 100,000 kilo-watt hours of green electricity to the pool and leisure centre per year, enough to power 25 homes.
  - b. **Supporting others to install renewables** – The fact that Oxford is at the heart of a community renewable energy economy reflects the support that the City Council has given to social enterprises such as the Low Carbon Hub and has

been willing to take risks around funding and grant applications for innovative approaches. The Council will continue to support the installation of renewable energy in and around the city, particularly where this links to local energy balancing and retaining money within the local economy, through working with organisations such as the Low Carbon Hub, which is funded by the Council and we have a revolving loan fund agreement to fund projects prior to community share offers to put such schemes in local community ownership. . The Council will keep under review investment and other fiscal opportunities to support the community renewable energy network in and around the city.

### **Creating a Zero Carbon Oxford partnership and influencing partners to do more**

41. The Citizens' Assembly highlighted the importance of the Council central role in working with everyone else to achieve a significant change area-wide reduction in carbon emissions. The City Council's agency extends beyond its own operations to where it can convene, inform, and influence others to take action – including other statutory bodies, businesses, voluntary organisations in the city, as well as neighbouring local authorities and central Government.
42. As the first UK city to hold citizens' assembly on climate change and with a wave of further citizens' assemblies planned by other local authorities – many of which have already made contact with us, Oxford City Council will provide advice and support to other councils as and when needed.
43. It is estimated by Anthesis that the sphere of the Council's potential influence covers 66% of all of the greenhouse gas emissions in Oxford. With strategic use of policies and good example, the Council will leverage its influence over current and potential emitters to collectively reduce the city's emissions.
44. The Citizens' Assembly expressed the view that the Council should convene a "coalition of the willing" across the city which includes institutions, communities and individuals to address the shared problem of our climate emergency.
  - a. **Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership** - The Budget for 2020/21 makes provision to re-launch the existing Low Carbon Oxford Partnership as the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership. Convened by the City Council, this new Partnership will galvanise emitters to agree an action plan and milestone targets on the part of all partners to make Oxford a net zero carbon city.
  - b. **Oxford Climate Change Summit** - Underpinning the new Partnership will be an Oxford Climate Change Summit to be held in early 2020. This will join key individuals from key organisations and businesses responsible for most of Oxford's greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the summit will be to develop a shared vision, forum, and plans to set a course towards a Zero Carbon Oxford.
  - c. **Retrofit Summit** - Oxford City Council will explore with others the opportunity to establish a retrofit summit in Oxford, similar to the existing EV Summit delivered by Oxford-based Green TV. The objective would be to bring together manufacturers, contractors, and designers associated with building retrofitting.



## **Helping people and communities to take a lead in tackling the climate crisis**

45. As part of the Council's city-wide approach to tackling climate change and developing a clear plan for our local environment, the City Council is keen to build a network of people and communities to drive change, particularly for the enhancement of Oxford's biodiversity with increased flora and fauna in the city. The Council intends to continue to work with Assembly Members in communications and further events to show how a raised level of understanding can affect behaviour around climate change.
- a. **Community grants** - The Council's £1.5 million per annum community grants programme will be reviewed to include the new explicit objective of increasing the promotion of community-led projects that have lasting and high impact, engage with people outside of those already taking action on climate change in their local communities, produce and share learning, and produce a shared vision of local climate action.
  - b. **Volunteer network** – Another of the desired outcomes of the Summit and the relaunched partnership would be the coordination of links with all of Oxford's environmental groups to create a wider network of volunteers.
  - c. **Engaging younger people** - Children and younger people are a central and emerging focus for the Council's work to tackle climate change. The Assembly included a number of young people in the city and heard directly from young speakers about the negative impacts of climate change for future generations. Council has voted to support the school protests on climate change which took place in September 2019 and backed efforts by school students to change the national curriculum so that it better teaches climate issues. Children are also one of the most effective channels to influence harder to engage adults.
  - d. **School curriculum programme** - The Council's outreach and curriculum programme with Oxford schools will be expanded to cover broader climate change issues. We will develop our work in this policy area with the city's Local Education Authority, Oxfordshire County Council, as part of a shared effort to tackle climate issues.
  - e. **Oxford Climate Change Youth Board** – a new youth board will be established to provide for the views of young people who live, work, and study in the city. A Youth Climate Action Summit, co-produced with the Council and compered by the new Youth Board, will give Oxford's children and young people the chance to express their views on how climate change could be tackled.

## **Strengthening the Council's communications and influencing capacity**

46. Despite the Council's efforts in recent years there was a lack of awareness within the Citizens' Assembly about some of the initiatives that were already taking place in Oxford. As the volume of activity at the level of the community grows (encouraged by the Council through the addition of climate as a priority in the community grants programme and greater use of community assets to meet the climate emergency), we expect the need for information about available initiatives to grow significantly.
47. There was a sense in the Citizens' Assembly that the Council needs to invest in a strong capacity to communicate a shared vision to reach 'net zero' that shows the roles played by local and national government, businesses, and individuals.

Members felt communications should be accessible and proactively pushed to residents rather than relying on them to search out information.

- a. **Public information** - The Budget for 2020/21 makes provision for additional expenditure on the Council's mass public information and engagement programmes to raise levels of understanding and commitment among residents on actions needed to address climate change. This engagement will put the Council's overarching objectives to achieve social justice front and centre.
- b. **Open source brand** - The Council will create and promote a Oxford to Zero brand, a new open-source brand that can be used by willing groups, and the Council, to develop a unique identity to climate emergency response projects and initiatives across the city, and build public awareness of the common purpose.
- c. **Microsite** - The Council will deliver a new interactive microsite to showcase all the climate change-related actions the City Council is taking and provide information for residents and businesses on actions they can take and signpost to other key sources of information. This would be supplemented by awareness raising through social media and poster campaigns.
- d. **Lobbying for change** - As a democratically elected organisation, the Council has a duty to take a lead on matters as serious as climate change, and in response to the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly it will lobby to seek changes to the national framework around buildings, planning, transport, waste and biodiversity to unlock Oxford's potential to do more.

### **A Council-wide approach**

48. For the Council to rise to the challenge of the climate emergency requires a deeper understanding and commitment of staff across the organisation on the actions we are taking. Alongside the education and engagement exercise more widely across the city, a similar activity will be required internally to ensure that teams see every aspect of the Council's work through the lens of the climate emergency. Steps underway include:
  - a. Setting up **formalised internal governance** to lead and report on the Council's response to the climate emergency
  - b. An **internal communication and engagement exercise** in step with the external programme
  - c. An **audit of all current activity** so that decisions around prioritisation and optimisation can be made at a corporate level.
49. At the Member level a co-ordination group involving Group Leaders has been formed to ensure that the cross-party approach, maintained since the climate emergency declaration and active in the Advisory Group of the Citizens' Assembly, is maintained.
50. The Council is engaging with the other local authorities across Oxfordshire at Member and officer levels to collaborate where this adds value to our activities.
51. In 2014 Oxford City Council resolved to disinvest from fossil fuels. The Council will continue to campaign for other bodies to take a similar approach, including the

Oxfordshire Local Government Pension Fund. The Council will also review investment and other fiscal support mechanisms it could apply to support the development of local renewable energy or other low carbon technologies where these protect the Council's investment income, used to fund services, and there are added environmental benefits.

52. There was a clear consensus within the Citizens' Assembly that Oxford should seek to be proactive around achieving net zero. This was viewed as consistent with Oxford's position, as a relatively privileged, well informed city with high levels of social capital that is also part of a nation that has a disproportional impact on developing nations. In addition, there was a strong recognition that delaying action simply passed a mounting problem to future generations. However, there was not a consensus about a target date. That is not surprising as the Citizens Assembly heard conflicting views on this and it is an extremely difficult thing to predict.
53. What the Assembly Members did ask for was intermediate targets at, say, 5-yearly intervals to drive action and measure progress. It is recommended that these are linked to the notional carbon budgets for the city, disaggregated from the national level, to be proposed in the upcoming Sustainability Strategy. These targets or budgets would set out the notional amount of carbon that the city has "available" to consume before we go past the point of no return of maintaining at least a 50% chance of maintaining global temperature rises below 1.5 degrees, the target arising from the Paris Agreement and reflected in the UK Climate Change Committee advise to the UK Government.

### **Financial implications**

54. Specific funding commitments arising immediately from the Citizens' Assembly where these are required over and above the significant existing commitments are detailed in the budget report elsewhere on the agenda of this meeting. They total £1,040,000 revenue over 4 years of the draft budget. This is on top of existing planned combined operating and capital expenditure of around £18 million over the same period on action to address climate change – which is significant in the Council's Budget context.
55. As work develops it is likely that further existing resources will be re-directed to achieving the outcomes sought by the Assembly. In many areas this will require an adjustment to spend profiles reflecting adjusted policies. Where policy changes are significant these will be explicitly reported for approval by members as will further bids for wholly new areas of work. These decisions will be informed by the programmes of work identified above that will be undertaken in 2020 and will shape the capital programme going forward.

### **Legal issues**

56. The legal framework for this work is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (CCA2008) and the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. The Order sets the expectation that the UK will achieve net zero by 2050. The CCA 2008 created a new independent body, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), to advise the government on how best to achieve its carbon emission targets and on setting carbon budgets

57. In considering its response to the Citizens' Assembly the Localism Act 2011 includes a general power of competence, which gives the Council as a local authority the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited. There are no direct legal implications from the Council's response to the Citizens' Assembly set out in this report.

### **Level of risk**

58. Climate change poses a significant risk to Oxford, the UK, and the world. Local implications of climate change include extreme heat and flooding from river breaches and persistent short term rainfall that leads to flash flooding. The risk of inaction in responding to the climate emergency is deemed to be many times more significant than the programme of actions set out in this report.

### **Equalities impact**

59. The Citizens Assembly Members were selected on a randomised basis, with quotas to broadly reflect the demographic profile of the city of Oxford in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and postcode area. The Citizens' Assembly spent some time considering the equalities aspects of driving a net zero city. These were both at an international and generational sense as well as at the more immediate, local level in terms of the social justice and equalities implication for residents of our city, with affordability a key concern. Clearly these will need to be carefully considered, balanced and reported on as the City Council's plans unfold.

60. As policy decisions come forward a full equalities impact assessment will be required to fully understand the implications and social justice impacts are understood and mitigated.

### **Conclusion**

61. The City Council took a bold step in committing to carry out a Citizens' Assembly, fully in accordance with best practice guidance. It has been an interesting experience in participatory democracy and will have broader lessons for the Council about how it seeks to engage with the people of Oxford in the future. It also gave the Council the insights it required about the appetite of the city to be proactive in responding to the challenges of climate change and moving to a net zero city, the trade-offs that people were prepared to make and the areas of particular sensitivity, and the co-benefits of addressing climate change. This invaluable insight has informed the plans being developed for the city to become even more proactive in achieving that goal.

<b>Report authors</b>	Mish Tullar and Jo Colwell
Job title	Head of Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Head of Environmental Sustainability
Service area or department	
Telephone	07483 101499 01865 252188
e-mail	<a href="mailto:mtullar@oxford.gov.uk">mtullar@oxford.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:jcolwell@oxford.gov.uk">jcolwell@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers:** None

This page is intentionally left blank