

Council

Monday 23 February 2015

Agenda Item 8 (a), Written Questions

Question From: Councillor Douglas Williamson

Question To: Leader of the Council, Councillor Barry Wood

Topic: Funding for the Community Action Group Project

Oxfordshire has 58 voluntary community groups dedicated to the reduction of waste and carbon emissions. Eight of them are located in Cherwell District, from north to south:

Banbury Community Action Group
Hook Norton Low Carbon
Duns Tew Community Action Group
Bicester Babystore
Bicester Green
Grassroots Bicester
Sustainable Kirtlington
Kidlington vs Climate Change

Last year, across the county over 65,000 residents took part in 1000 events and activities organised by community action groups, relating to issues such as

Waste prevention
Sustainable transport
Nature conservation
Alleviation of food and fuel poverty

Although the individual groups have the potential to attract independent funding for their own projects, it is difficult to do so without the network support of the Community Action Group (CAG) Project funded by Oxfordshire County Council.

The Project costs £96,000 a year which pays for two full-time employees, insurance for public events, and grants of up to £200 each for groups that need it. In 2014, this investment returned £800,000 of financial benefits to the county and created 10 full-time jobs by helping to set up social enterprises.

It has received over 50 local and national awards, as well as one for International Best Practice and has attracted attention at government level, where discussions are taking place on the nationwide adoption of the Community Impact Modelling Tool – a methodology developed by the Oxfordshire CAG Project for measuring the impact of community action.

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing to reduce its funding for the Project over the next three years until 2018 when it will be withdrawn completely.

Does the leader agree that the Community Action Group Project represents outstanding value, and if so, what action can Cherwell District Council take to help secure its future?