

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Executive**

**2 October 2023**

### **Response to Petition Received on Food Choices**

#### **Report of Corporate Director Communities and Climate Action Manager**

This report is not public

#### **Purpose of report**

To set out the council's response to the petition received at the 17 July 2023 Council meeting asking the council to support the raising of awareness of the links between food choices, individual carbon footprints and biodiversity loss.

The wording of the petition was as follows:

*"We, the undersigned, petition Council to use its website and leaflets to households on recycling and food waste to raise awareness of the links between food choices, individual carbon footprints and biodiversity loss.*

*We ask Council to encourage residents to consume less meat and dairy and to support local growers and farmers by choosing seasonal, local produce. "*

This report sets out how the council has considered the petition and seeks approval of Executive for its proposed resolution.

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To acknowledge that the council has already taken considerable steps to support the need for changes in the way food is produced in order to reduce its impact on the climate and biodiversity.
- 1.2 To acknowledge that the council is continuing to support the district in reducing its carbon emissions and seek opportunities to enhance local biodiversity and is working with a range of partners on several initiatives to make this possible.
- 1.3 To acknowledge the work of the Food Insecurity Working Group and the development of a food strategy locally through Good Food Oxfordshire.
- 1.4 To ask the Corporate Director Communities to respond to the petitioner setting out the council's position.

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Following the debate of the petition at Full Council on 17 July 2023, the petitioner was informed that their petition would be considered by the Corporate Director Communities and the Climate Action Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities, with a view to a report being submitted for consideration by Executive at their 2 October 2023 meeting.
- 2.2 This report sets out the council's consideration of the issues raised in the petition, in the context of wider strategic work it has done.
- 2.3 The council has for several years now been taking steps to improve its sustainability and that of the district. In 2019 it declared a Climate Emergency followed in 2020 by the production of the Climate Change Framework.
- 2.4 The Climate Change Framework commits the council to supporting the district to reduce its emissions on the way to becoming carbon net zero. This commitment includes action on the introduction of biodiversity net gain targets, supporting investment in increasing tree cover and encouraging improvements in carbon intensity of local agriculture and food consumed.

## 3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 Implicit in the commitment that the council has made to support the district to reduce its emissions, is a recognition that changes are needed across many aspects of life, including in the production and consumption of food.
- 3.2 It is understood that intensive animal agriculture is a significant contributor to the emissions from the food sector, and that some reductions in consumption in meat and dairy are likely to be required.
- 3.3 It is also understood that across the globe, the expansion of animal agriculture is having a significant impact upon natural habitats and therefore contributing to the loss of biodiversity.
- 3.4 The council recognises that in supporting emissions reductions in the district, it has a role to play in supporting local food growing initiatives, supporting food growers and producers and influencing food choices through information campaigns.
- 3.5 Information about food choices is contained on the Climate Action Oxfordshire website, which is linked to from Cherwell DC's website, where the benefits of both a vegetarian and a plant-based diet are outlined.
- 3.6 Cherwell District council has signed up to the principles of Bioregional's *One Planet Living* which support local prosperity and promoting a culture of sustainable living. There are three principles which are particularly relevant to this report:
  - Land and Culture – Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife.

- Local and sustainable food – Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal organic food and vegetable protein.
- Zero Waste – Reducing consumption, reusing and recycling to achieve zero waste and zero pollution.

3.7 A Climate Change Action Plan is currently being developed for the council, in which the principles of *One Planet Living* have been considered. The Action Plan is being brought to Executive on 6 November. The council will continue to examine how it can strengthen its support for the principles of *One Planet Living*, for example through their inclusion in the Local Plan.

3.8 The council is a signatory to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy whose vision is that everyone in the county can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day.

3.9 The Strategy called for the establishment of Food Action Groups across the county, and one has been set up in Cherwell. The Group is aiming to set up a Food Action Plan and is currently examining aspects such as sustainable supply chains, food justice, reductions in food waste and the creation of a sustainable food economy. Officers and councillors from Cherwell District Council continue to attend the meetings and support the work of this group.

3.10 As previously mentioned, a Climate Change Action Plan is being produced, based on the 2020 Climate Change Framework, setting out the actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the council and the district.

3.11 The Plan contains a suite of actions designed to support and enhance the natural environment. The natural environment needs action across many areas, if a halt in biodiversity decline is to be achieved and this is reflected in the Climate Change Plan. Both enhancements to biodiversity and an increased in the ability of the natural environment to absorb carbon emissions is vital for our long-term sustainability.

3.12 The council will also be supporting the establishment of an Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy, development of which will be led by Oxfordshire County Council, with support from the districts.

3.13 Furthermore, under the obligations of the Environment Act 2021, in early 2024 the council will have to produce a 5-year plan setting out how it will help meet the government's aspirations to halt the decline in biodiversity and protect 30% of land.

3.14 Both of the above activities place significant emphasis on CDC to identify tangible actions it can take in the support of biodiversity enhancement.

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 This report has set out how the council already recognises the impact of food choices on the climate and the natural environment, and has already taken steps to initiate positive change.

- 4.2 Several policy areas contribute to this theme, including the Climate Change Framework 2020, the adoption of *One Planet Living*, council support of the Climate Action Oxfordshire website and the developing Climate Action Plan.
- 4.3 Changes to methods of food production and in public behaviour around food choices need action across both the public and private sectors. This includes Cherwell District Council, which will continue to work on reducing emissions, protecting the natural environment and improving the sustainability of the district of Cherwell.

## **5.0 Consultation**

Several service areas across the council were consulted in the writing of this report, including Planning, Leisure and Environmental Services.

## **6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1 – Take the steps to encourage all residents to reduce their consumption of meat and dairy, as sought in the petition. This option is rejected as the council is already taking several steps to encourage residents to understand the implications of their food choices and therefore meeting our responsibilities to raise awareness of these issues as part of a programme of climate change activity.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 There are no finance and resource implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, [joanne.kaye@cherwell-dec.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.kaye@cherwell-dec.gov.uk)

### **Legal Implications**

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, [Shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### **Risk Implications**

- 7.3 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556, [celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **Equalities and Inclusion Implications**

- 7.4 There are no equalities nor inclusion implications arising directly from this report. However, in line with our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion framework, any decisions and proposals will have a correspondent Equalities Impact Assessment, to make sure any potential impact is mitigated.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556,  
[celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **Sustainability Implications**

- 7.5.0 The report has already set out the positive work that the council is doing and committed to around food choices and biodiversity, and these make a positive contribution to the council's sustainability goals.

Comments checked by:

Ed Potter, Assistance Director Environmental Service,  
[ed.potter@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:ed.potter@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **8.0 Decision Information**

### **Key Decision**

**Financial Threshold Met:** No

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** No

### **Wards Affected**

All

### **Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

Supporting environmental sustainability

### **Lead Councillor**

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

### **Document Information**

#### **Appendix number and title**

- None

### **Background papers**

None

### **Report Author and contact details**

Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 01295 227148, [jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)