

Infrastructure and Development Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 17 January 2024
10.00am, held at County Hall, Norwich

Present:

Cllr Vic Thomson – Vice Chair

Cllr Claire Bowes
Cllr Chris Dawson
Cllr Graham Carpenter
Cllr Rob Colwell
Cllr Jim Moriarty

Cllr William Richmond
Cllr Catherine Rowett
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby
Cllr Robert Savage
Cllr Tony White

Also Present:

Cllr Eric Vardy

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Also Present:

Al Collier

Jan Feeney

Jon Franklin

Martin Horlock

Nicola Ledain

Tom McCabe

Steve Miller

Sarah Rhoden

Matt Tracey

Laura Waters

Director of Procurement and Sustainability, CES

Employment and Skills Manager, CES

Strategy, Intelligence and Resourcing Manager, CES

Specialist Advice Manager, CES

Committee Officer, Democratic Services

Chief Executive, Norfolk County Council

Director of Community, Culture and Heritage, CES

Director of Community Information and Learning, CES

Growth and Infrastructure Group Manager, CES

Strategic Planning Team Manager, CES

1. Apologies and substitutions

1.1 Apologies received from Cllr James Bensly, substituted by Cllr Graham Carpenter.

1.2 Due to the apologies received by the Chair, Cllr James Bensly, a Vice Chair was elected for the meeting. Cllr Martin Wilby was duly elected.

2. Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no interests declared.

4. Items of Urgent Business

4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

5.1 There were no public questions received.

6. Local Member Issues / Questions

6.1 There was one question submitted from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton, and the response is attached at appendix A.

6.2 Cllr Rumsby, on behalf of Cllr Brociek-Coulton, stated that the scheme in Devon had been running since 2015 and it was important that this was recognised in the response. The Chair agreed to highlight that to the Officers.

7. Climate Action Plans Tranche 2

7.1 The committee received the report which proposed the second tranche of actions for the committee's review, following endorsement of the first tranche of climate actions by Cabinet in October. The second tranche of actions covered initiatives relating to energy, the green economy, and waste and the circular economy.

7.2 Cabinet Member Cllr Eric Vardy introduced the report.

7.3 Members commented that the initiatives and plans could be bolder and more ambitious. There was concern that if not enough was done now, NCC would be playing catch up. Officers explained that the new climate policy that had been endorsed by Corporate Select Committee in January 2024 and there was revised countrywide targets which would align with national trajectory of reducing carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 baseline, which was an ambitious target.

7.4 Members congratulated the officers on an impressive document which contained many important initiatives. Members asked, with regards to the constraints on the national grid and the objective for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP's) bringing socio-economic benefits, did this mean that the benefits overrode the damage caused to the environment by building the NSIP's. Officers explained that objectives one and six in the report should be taken in consideration with one another. Whilst the first objective stated that the maximum socio-economic benefits were wanted and would be encouraged, objective six stated that NCC would continue to use their powers to lobby and as a statutory consultee respond to applications to ensure that those NSIP's were built in the least intrusive way. It was also noted that if the projects were not realised, it would impact the decarbonisation targets.

7.5 The Cabinet Member reminded the committee that additional actions and initiatives could be added to the action plan if the committee felt it necessary and it was not exclusive to what was already included. He added that the existing strategies helped address climate change within the capabilities of the council.

7.6 The committee heard that a recent piece of work had been undertaken by Gemserv, who had been commissioned to help understand the green skills needs of the county. This research was now being used and was feeding into conversations with course and education providers, helping them to understand the level of needs and helping

them to make their courses and activities greener. Green champions were also being introduced amongst those providers to help share good practice and to ensure that the needs were being met where they needed to be.

- 7.7 Officers were currently coordinating tranche three actions which would be put on the forward plans for the committee's review shortly, and all three action plan tranches would be brought together as a single list and updated for consideration by the committee in Autumn 2024. Members encouraged officers to report to committee as soon as possible and were keen to see the tranche three action plan.
- 7.8 Members asked if making the targets measurable was possible to highlight at what stage actions were at. Officers explained that Innovate UK were currently carrying out a pilot with Cambridgeshire County Council to create a framework in which the local area contribution to the national net zero commitment could be quantified which will hopefully produce a template approach which Norfolk could utilise.
- 7.9 Having reviewed and commented on the second tranche of actions, the committee **RESOLVED** to endorse the actions to progress to Cabinet.

8. Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain and Pollinator Action Plan

- 8.1 The Committee received the report which would help NCC achieve key outcomes for the Council's Climate Strategy and the County Council's key priorities by increasing biodiversity and helping the environment be more resilient to climate change for the benefit of wildlife, people, and the economy.
- 8.2 Engagement with residents and town and parish councils was key in achieving the strategy. It was acknowledged that there was some really good work already being carried out in the community. In response to a suggestion of a mapping exercise to identify groups which were active, Officers reported that there was a community directory which listed those groups. There was also an annual biodiversity awards scheme which acknowledged the hard work of community groups, and this would continue.
- 8.3 The recruitment process for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Manager had begun. The Biodiversity Officer was initially being funded from the short-term funding from Government. It was hoped that within 2-3 years it would become cost neutral.
- 8.4 The committee heard that the Norfolk Strategic Planners Group considered Biodiversity Net Gain on a regular basis. This group involved Norfolk County Council, representatives from District Councils and Broads Authority.
- 8.5 Officers reported that they were in the early stages of investigating selling biodiversity credits by assessing the market demand.
- 8.6 The recently approved Glyphosate Policy which aims to reduce the amount of Glyphosate used in the county worked alongside the pollinator action plan. The Cabinet Member explained that although the policy was currently to reduce the amount of Glyphosate used, he was aware that a suitable replacement was being researched and it was hoped that in time Glyphosate would be eliminated in favour of a more suitable and more manageable replacement.

8.7 Having reviewed and commented on the report, and in particular Norfolk County Council's role as a Responsible Authority for Biodiversity Net Gain and their role in providing new habitats which could be counted as biodiversity net gain, the Select Committee **RESOLVED to:**

1. Note the timescale to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
2. Note that an environment strategy will be produced in 2024 that may outline potential for biodiversity net gain uplift as a matter of policy beyond the statutory minimum
3. Support the adoption of the Pollinator Action Plan by the Council

9. Forward Work Programme

- 9.1 The committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services, which set out the Forward Work Programme for the committee to enable the Committee to review and shape.
- 9.2 Members asked if the Climate Action Plans Tranche Three could come to committee as soon as possible.
- 9.3 The Select Committee **agreed** the Forward Work Programme for the Select Committee, as set out in Appendix A.

The meeting closed at 11.05am

James Bensly, Chair



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