



Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 January 2024 at
10:00 am in Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DL

Present:

Cllr R Oliver (Chair)
Cllr D Bills
Cllr G Carpenter
Cllr T Jermy
Cllr B Price
Cllr D Sayers
Cllr A White
Cllr V Thomson
*Cllr A White

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Fisher
Cllr Jones
Cllr Watkins

Also Present:

Sarah Rhoden	Director for Community, Information and Learning
Jo Richardson	Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
Jonathan Franklin	Strategy Manager (Procurement & Net Zero)
Al Collier	Director of Procurement and Sustainability
Jeremy Wiggin	Head of Sustainable Transport
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Titus Adam	Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)
Sam Pittam-Smith	Director of Strategy, Design & Delivery
Maisie Coldman	Trainee Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Clancy (substituted by Cllr Fisher), Cllr Birmingham (substituted by Cllr Jones), Cllr Smith, Cllr Roper (substituted by Cllr Watkins) and Cllr Nunn.

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

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.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

6.1 There were no member issues/questions.

7. Climate Policy for Norfolk County Council

7.1 The Select Committee received and was introduced to the Climate Policy for Norfolk County Council report by Cllr Vardy, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste. The importance of the Climate Policy in a time when the reality of climate change was already being felt by local communities was highlighted.

7.2 The report introduced a Climate Policy that reflects the main elements of the Climate Strategy in a more concise policy format. It also used the Climate Policy as an opportunity to restate the council's county wide commitment, seeking better alignment with the UK's 2050 net zero target and the ambitious trajectory set out in the national carbon budgets. If agreed at Full Council, the Climate Policy would go on to form part of the Policy Framework. The Select Committee was asked to review and comment on the proposed Climate Policy, including the new statement of the council's county-wide net zero commitment.

7.3 The following points were noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- Some members felt that the Climate Policy did not go far enough or was not ambitious enough. Officers highlighted that the UK had halved emissions since the 1990s, and the target to align the county with the national target to halve it again, in a much shorter time frame, was felt to be an ambitious goal.
- Members generally felt that the Climate Policy could more enthusiastically capture the positive work that was being carried out and could also note the other benefits of reducing carbon emissions such as financial savings, improved wellbeing, etc
- A member raised concerns that carbon emissions were still being incurred even though they may no longer be captured in Norfolk County Council's (NCC) estate emissions. For example, the move towards academisation of schools and home working. It was however confirmed that NCC estate emissions do not include the emissions of schools.

Thus, there was no impact on the figures of NCC estate emissions if a school became an academy.

- Officers confirmed that NCC was due to achieve a 66 percent estate emission reduction in 2024/25, the percentage was currently in the high 50s.
- There was currently no framework that outlines local areas' contribution to national reduced carbon emissions. Work funded by Innovate UK at Cambridgeshire Council was trying to establish a framework that could be replicated across other councils.
- It was noted by officers that metrics allow for progress to be monitored and for carbon budgets to be followed. Tracking of action plans would show progress against deliverables under the Climate Strategy
- The committee heard that thought had been given when setting out the Council's budget to account for the required adaptations for the effects of climate change. Most of the cost would be incurred long term. It was also noted that there was a need to remind the central Government of the additional costs that would be incurred.
- A member raised that active travel and public transport are different but were often grouped. In response to this, it was noted that whilst they are different, it was beneficial to look at them in a joined up and parallel approach. A journey might often combine public transport and active travel.
- The Local Transport Plan supports into the Climate Policy and provides specific details on the transport ambitions. Members heard that Norfolk performs strongly in the East of England in respect to the progress on providing electric vehicle charging points and over half of the Norwich bus fleet would be electric from March 2024. The officer noted that a lot was going on that was not being amplified.
- The officers noted that the Carbon Quantification guidance for transport emissions had not been received from the central government. This framework would inform how the benefits of carbon reduction are quantified which could show how aspects of the Climate Policy were working. There was a tension between trying to move ahead and waiting for the guidance. With respect to transport, work was being carried out with WSP, an environmental consultancy, to begin early work on quantifying carbon reduction.
- In response to a member's question about the percentage of electric vehicles in NCC's fleet, the committee heard that NCC has a relatively small fleet in comparison to third party providers. The Fire Service now had plug in hybrid vehicles as electric vehicles were not yet fit for this particular application.

- The limited inclusion of agriculture and farming within the Climate Policy, and the opportunity to encourage farms to transition to lower carbon practices, were raised. Officers highlighted that the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency were responsible for having conversations about lower carbon practices and that DEFRA already had incentive schemes in place. At NCC, the officers responsible for leading conversations about sustainable land practices were Wendy Brooks and her team. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that there was an ambition to hold a session for the agriculture sector, similar to one held for businesses, to discuss how practices could be adapted.
- There was some degree of control to exert influence within the supply chain to encourage improved environmental practices. The committee heard that NCC's community equipment stores operator, Medequip, had adopted an electric fleet to reduce their carbon emissions. Additionally, some major highway contracts were due to be retendered and would provide the opportunity to make emission reduction a requirement. Work was also continuing to increase the number of electric buses in Norfolk and Norse was due to produce a climate change plan later in the year.
- Regarding streetlighting, the committee heard that the initial tranche, which focused on bigger more energy consuming streetlights, was now completed. The focus was now on updating the smaller streetlights. It was anticipated that half of the remaining streets light would have been updated by next winter.
- To ensure that tree saplings are being planted in the most suitable conditions, there are considerations in place to ensure that the right tree is being planted at the right place at the right time. The committee heard that future contracts would need to include provisions to ensure that trees planted as part of construction schemes are planted correctly and then maintained appropriately.
- Concerning the considerations being given to the disproportionate impacts of climate changes on particular communities, it was noted that the benefits of tackling climate change often incurred positive impacts for people experiencing inequalities, such a warmer homes and better public transport.
- It was felt by members that residents needed to be involved in Norfolk's approach to tackling climate change. Parish councils often do not have a climate change plan in place. In response, Cllr Vardy said that parish councils could in some instances do more and that the Carbon Literacy programme being developed for members at NCC would also be shared with Parish councils.

- In response to a member's question about whether NCC would declare a climate emergency, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste responded that this motion had been discussed at Full Council several times and that he felt that action was needed rather than declarations.
- There was a working assumption provided by officers that the policy would be reviewed on a five-year basis.
- Highlighted within discussions was the benefit of Member collaboration and idea sharing to help shape the policy.

7.4 Cllr Price proposed that there was an annual report to a Select Committee that would note the progress of the Climate Policy. The proposal was seconded by Cllr White and following a vote, the recommendation was **CARRIED**.

7.5 Having considered and commented on the Climate Policy the Select Committee **agreed** to:

1. **Endorse** the Climate Policy's progression for Cabinet's consideration.

8. Progress on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026

8.1 The committee received and was introduced to, the Progress on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026 report by Jo Richardson, Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The plan included a range of priorities agreed by the Cabinet in March 2023 that aimed to ensure that no community was left behind in Norfolk. The committee heard that one particular area of focus was to eliminate racism at work. NCC was more ethnically diverse than Norfolk as a whole, and with a growing international workforce, it was important that employees felt safe and valued at work.

8.2 The Corporate Select Committee was asked to review and comment on the progress to date, to consider the benefit of briefing sessions that cover specific related topics, and to consider the role of the Select Committee in their support of Cabinet to continue to champion race equality in Norfolk.

8.3 The following points were noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- A member highlighted the limited diversity of councillor representation and suggested that political groups should be encouraging more diverse representation.
- The staff survey was mentioned as a useful tool for capturing information and informing the direction of work required concerning EDI.
- In response to a member's question about the time scale for implementing EDI objectives, the officer shared that there are a number

of priorities and that it was not possible to deliver them all at the same time. The report sets out the top priorities which are agreed by Cabinet and would be delivered first. It was seen as important that report sets out the timescales for delivering all of the priorities to ensure all stakeholders understand our plans for progressing priority areas.

- Work to design race equality training has progressed and the training has been developed, piloted and is due to be launched soon. The training has been revised to reflect the feedback from colleagues that suggested that they wanted less abstract training and more training on critical skills to deal with and manage racism at work. This training had been developed, a pilot had occurred, and it was due to be launched soon.
- A member asked for details about the internal wellbeing service. It was shared that the service was well established and there were high levels of reports into the service. Cabinet received an update on the service as part of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report considered at the 10 January 2024 meeting.
- A member asked for reassurance that the fear of reporting racism was being addressed. In response, the committee heard that highly valued international colleagues, who were filling vital vacancies in social and health care to deliver essential services, were worried about reporting racism in case it impacted on their visa status. Other colleagues were worried about reporting racism in case it impacted on their career prospects. The member was assured that efforts were taking place to enforce the message that anyone who makes a report will be supported by their line manager or with HR if that was preferable.

8.4 Having reviewed and commented on the progress on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026, the Select Committee **resolved** to **NOTE** the information.

9. Forward Work Plan 2024

9.1 The committee resolved to **agree** the forward work programme.

Meeting concluded at 11:11

Rhodri Oliver Chair
Corporate Select Committee



If you need these minutes in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.