



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PANEL

9.30am to 11.50am

9 January 2013

Present: Councillors Bremner (chair), Carlo (vice chair), Driver, Grahame, Grenville, Lubbock, Sands (M)) and Stammers (from item 2)

### 1. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2012.

### 2. **JOINT CORE STRATEGY (JCS) FOR BROADLAND, NORWICH AND SOUTH NORFOLK – PROPOSED SUBMISSION OF THE REMITTED PARTS FOLLOWING THE LEGAL CHALLENGE**

The planning team leader (policy) presented the report and pointed out that there was an error in the recommendation which had been amended in the report to cabinet (14 January 2013), in respect of the last sentence of the second paragraph by deleting “sustainable development panel so that that the sentence was “Cabinet recommends to council:” He explained that the report would be considered by cabinet on 14 January 2013 and council on 29 January 2013. The documents would be submitted by 4 February 2013 and a public inquiry was scheduled for May 2013. The panel’s comments would be reported to cabinet at its meeting on 14 January 2013.

During discussion, members were advised that legal advice with regard to the high court judgement following the legal challenge had been taken and that an amended homes and housing topic paper had been produced to update local evidence on the targets for housing growth in the JCS. This evidence confirmed that the JCS housing targets were appropriate.

Councillor Carlo referred to the court order and said that there had been two material considerations that had arisen since the meeting of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership in December should be considered as having an impact on the JCS and the proposed submission of the remitted parts. The government had revoked the East of England regional spatial strategy (RSS) on 3 January 2013. The submission for a City Deal for Norwich would impact on the distribution of growth set out in the JCS. The promotion of the Research Park in the south west would result in employment growth being remote from the proposed housing growth located to the north east of the city and was unsustainable. In response the head of planning advised Councillor Carlo that there would be an opportunity at the forthcoming public

examination on the submitted JCS. The evidence in the homes and housing growth topic paper supported the level of growth proposed in the JCS and the submission of the remitted parts could proceed with confidence. The City Deal for the Greater Norwich area was a proposal and the government had invited an expression of interest from the three district councils and the county council and could lead to further funding and schemes beneficial to the city. The promotion of the Research Park as one element of a possible City Deal assisted with the delivery of the JCS. The JCS was flexible and included substantial housing growth in the south west sector (including Costessey, Cringleford and Hethersett) and growth in the north east sector included both strategic housing and employment proposals.

**RESOLVED**, with 5 members voting in favour (Councillors Bremner, Driver, Grenville, Lubbock, Sands (M)) and 3 members voting against (Councillors Carlo, Grahame and Stammers on the grounds that new material considerations had arisen since the court order in response to the legal challenge had been issued) that:

Having taken account of the information in this report and representations received during the publication period, the Sustainable Development Panel considers it appropriate for cabinet and council to submit the remitted parts of the Joint Core Strategy to the Secretary of State unchanged from the originally submitted version and that:

Cabinet recommends to council:

- (1) That the Proposed Submission Document is considered to be legally compliant and sound; and
- (2) That the “Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk: proposed submission document” and supporting documents should be submitted to the Secretary of State under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012;
- (3) To delegate authority for the deputy chief executive (operations) in consultation with the portfolio holder for the environment and development to approve, in partnership with GNDP partners, the detail of technical documents required to be submitted alongside the JCS.

### **3. SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES (DPDS): UPDATE ON CONSULTATION AND NEXT STAGES**

The planning policy team leader (projects) presented the report and pointed out that there would be further reports to the next two meetings of the panel.

During discussion, the planning policy team leader (projects), together with the head of planning and the planning team leader (policy) answered members' questions in relation to the examination by the planning inspector and the process leading to adoption.

**RESOLVED** to note the report and the indicative timetable for examination and adoption.

#### **4. UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

The head of planning presented the report and answered members' questions on the government's proposals and the council's responses to the consultation.

During discussion on the proposals to speed up the planning system for large scale business and commercial projects, members expressed concern that applicants would have the option to submit applications over 40,000 square metres to the Secretary of State which would bypass local democracy. The head of planning said that developments of that size did not come forward in the city very often. For large developments it could take several years to obtain the necessary planning consents and land acquisitions from local planning authorities. The Secretary of State could deal with all of these more quickly and there was an argument to request that local authorities had the power to do this. There were no proposals to treat large companies on its market share as "nationally significant" and members were reminded that there were local policies to protect small and medium business and commercial concerns.

During discussion on the extension of permitted development rights as set out in appendix 2, members noted that the planning applications committee had been briefed on the proposals and two recent planning applications for extensions had been refused on the grounds that extensions would block light to adjacent properties. Members expressed concern that the increase in permitted development rights removed the ability of local planning authorities to control development, particularly to protect the amenity of neighbouring terraced or semi-detached properties and sites of specific scientific interest.

The panel then considered the government's proposals for planning performance and the planning guarantee and the council's draft response. The panel noted that the government proposed to take over the planning function from failing local planning authorities. Members noted the value of pre-application discussions leading to appropriate schemes coming forward. The head of planning said that it was difficult to monitor the effectiveness of pre-application discussions and presentations to the council's design review panel and the planning applications committee but that feedback was received from the developers. Not all developers took up the opportunity for pre-application discussions. During discussion a member suggested that it should be possible to differentiate between applications that were departures from the development plan in assessing either the speed or quality of planning decisions. Members considered that this suggestion should be incorporated into the council's response.

**RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and to endorse the consultation responses subject to in relation to appendix 3, planning performance and planning guarantee including that it should be possible to differentiate between applications that are departures from the development plan in assessing either the speed or quality of planning decisions.

#### **5. NORWICH BIG SWITCH AND SAVE**

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and answered members' questions. The acceptance rate had been 20% resulting in around £60,000 being

saved from fuel bills and therefore benefiting the local economy. The bid to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) had been successful and would provide an additional funded post to assist in future “switch and save” campaigns.

Members welcomed that officers across the city council's services had taken part in the Norwich switch and save project which would save money for Norwich residents. There was some concern that this would impact on the other duties of the environmental strategy manager and his team. The environmental strategy manager explained that he was responsible for co-ordinating the work on the affordable warmth strategy which had led to the switch and save project.

During discussion the environmental strategy manager referred to the report and answered members' questions. He summarised the lessons that had been learnt during the process which would be shared with other district councils in Norfolk and that a second tranche would be held in January/early February. A member pointed out that the switching specialist partner's call centre had been particularly helpful. The additional post would provide more resource to target particular groups in the community and increase up take. The panel noted that the measures to include customers with pre-paid meters and that the advantage of joining other local authorities was to increase the number of people on pre-paid meters joining in an auction.

A member suggested that green tariffs should be included in the next tranche. The environmental strategy manager advised members that green tariffs were not standardised between the fuel companies. It was noted that some customers might choose to switch a green tariff not necessarily to save money.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) thank the environmental strategy manager and all of the other officers engaged in this project;
- (2) note the report.

CHAIR