



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

16:00 to 17:10

8 November 2022

Present: Councillors Hampton (chair), Stutely (vice chair), Carlo, Champion, Lubbock, Padda (from item 3 below)

Also present: Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing
Councillor Maguire, Lord Mayor

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022.

3. Biodiversity Strategy 2022 – 2032 (Post Consultation) and Biodiversity Development Plan

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing, gave a presentation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy and Development Plan, which would be considered at by cabinet at its meeting on 16 November 2022. (A copy [presentation](#) is available on the council's website with the papers for this meeting.) He introduced the following officers: the head of strategy, engagement and culture; environmental strategy manager; the planning policy team leader (on behalf of the head of planning and regulatory services); and the head of environmental services, and the graduate management trainee, and thanked them and their colleagues for their contribution to the strategy and plan. As highlighted by COP27, this work was critical. Following the consultation, additional objectives had been included (educational opportunities and food production) and an ancillary objective of biodiversity improvement (such as the planting fruit trees).

Members welcomed the strategy and expressed their gratitude for the work on the development plan and the establishment of the biodiversity working group.

A member commented on the need to ensure that trees planted, as an important adaptation to climate change, could survive extremes of temperature and drought. The environmental strategy manager said that nature's approach for resilience and survival was diversity. A diverse planting strategy was one of the principles of ecological management during climate change. Later in the meeting, the environmental strategy manager said that whilst indigenous species would be

considered, soundings would also be sought to the use of species that were not native to the UK and were resilient to the changing climate, particularly the extreme heat. The UK was currently a maritime climate but could become more continental. Species from nearby countries within a 1000-mile radius would be considered. The working group would oversee the strategy. It was noted that street trees had died in Heathgate, and a member asked that plastic ties were no longer used because the young trees had been “garrotted” by them. The environmental strategy manager noted this request and confirmed that Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL) was involved in the development plan and would work together with the council to deliver the strategy. Later in the discussion a member said that it was important that areas were left for rewilding and that the council needed to improve liaison with its contractors to conserve these areas.

Members of the panel asked for clarification on a number of points relating to the consultation. The environmental strategy manager confirmed that the University of East Anglia had received a copy of the draft strategy as part of the consultation. Members were also advised that the list of interested parties was not exhaustive. The Friends groups listed had actively engaged in the consultation and development of the strategy. Members were assured that as workstreams came forward, the council would reach out to the Friends groups associated with individual parks as appropriate. The environmental strategy manager confirmed that housing officers had advised that changes to tenancy agreements could be made to permit them to reduce interventions to tenants’ gardens that were overgrown, thus enhancing biodiversity and making savings.

A member pointed out that whilst 10 per cent biodiversity net gain was mandatory in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, other authorities, such as Cambridge City Council, Litchfield District Council, Swindon Borough Council and Guildford Borough Council were being more ambitious and encouraging 20 per cent biodiversity net gain from developers. The population of the city had increased, and common place habitats had been lost to development. The council should consider requiring a higher percentage as best practice. The planning policy team leader said that as part of the work on the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) a baseline survey was being carried out to support the requirement for at least 10 per cent biodiversity net gain. The council wanted to be ambitious but was aware of other obligations on developers. The determination of planning applications had to take into account the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and weight given to biodiversity net gain was assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, the direction of travel was changing, with the introduction of at least 10 per cent biodiversity net gain and was likely to be strengthened. Members were advised that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had produced the methodology for working out the baseline and measuring biodiversity net gain. The environmental strategy manager assured members that the methodology was straight forward and easy to apply; it should not be a barrier to achieving biodiversity net gain.

As part of the discussion members touched on the important leadership role of the council to enhance biodiversity, not just in its parks and green spaces. This included influencing large landowners, including Anglian Water and the prison, and residents to maximise biodiversity. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of outdoor space. Members commented on their regret about the use of paving, decking and Astro turf in parks, open spaces and private gardens, noting that this was chosen as

being easy to maintain. The environmental strategy manager said that the communications and engagement strategy attached to the Biodiversity Strategy and that no entity would be excluded. It was considered that there would be a wider cultural change in society in general.

Councillor Maguire, Lord Mayor, spoke in support of the strategy and development plan, which was being launched in the week of COP27 but had been a lengthy process to produce a sustainable policy in terms of environment, economy and social that would benefit the city, increase carbon capture and contribute to carbon reduction.

Members noted that marshes and wetlands made a large contribution to the city's carbon capture. The council would work with Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Norwich Fringe Project to address invasive species at these sites. It was theoretically possible to measure carbon capture where data was available from academics.

In reply to a comment from a member, the cabinet member for wellbeing confirmed that there would be plenty of opportunities for ward councillors to engage as the workstream, set out in the development plan, was implemented. A member suggested that all members of the council would benefit from a briefing to help them in this leadership role, so that they could act as a "rallying cry" for residents in the wards that they represented. The environmental strategy manager explained that funding would be sought to deliver the strategy. This included £7,000 art project funded by the Greenhouse Trust that would facilitate members of the public to plant trees.

The chair welcomed this sustainable strategy and said that it would provide environmental, financial and social benefits. She took the opportunity to thank Councillor Giles and the officers for the strategy.

RESOLVED, having considered the Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2023 and the Biodiversity Development Plan 2022/2025 and recommend them to cabinet for approval.

CHAIR