



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

09:00 to 10:55

17 December 2020

Present: Councillors Maguire (chair), Stonard (vice chair), Carlo, Lubbock, McCartney-Gray and Osborn

Apologies: Councillor Giles

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes held on 1 July 2020.

3. Natural Capital Evidence Compendium Norfolk and Suffolk November 2020 – presentation

(Professor Andrew Lovett, University of East Anglia (UEA), attended the meeting for this item.)

The chair introduced Andrew Lovett and explained that the council would be considering its biodiversity strategy in the near future.

Andrew Lovett by way of introduction said that he had been born locally and that he was a geographer, working in the School of Environmental Sciences, UEA. His specialism was in geographic information systems (GIS, a computer system to map data). The presentation (available on the council's website) provided an introduction to the content and form of the [Natural Capital Evidence Compendium Norfolk and Suffolk](#).

The chair thanked Andrew Lovett for his presentation and invited him to attend a meeting of the panel to update the panel on the progress of the plan in 12 months' time. Andrew Lovett confirmed that he would be happy to do that. He considered that the partner organisations had put a good environmental plan in place but it would need regular updating over the 25 years covered in the plan.

Following the presentation, members of the panel had the opportunity to ask Andrew Lovett questions. Members welcomed the plan and considered it to be a "comprehensive", "brilliant" and "unique" piece of work.

The panel's questions are summarised with Andrew Lovett's answers below:

- **Given the complex partnership arrangements and ambitions of the plan, how could partner organisations align strategies and ensure its delivery?**

This question identified one of the key challenges to the plan. The steering group for the project comprised representatives from the local authorities, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Wildlife Trust and the National Farmers' Union with diverse interests. The plan had not been straightforward to produce but there was a willingness to make it happen and an opportunity to do things differently, in the context of the climate and environmental emergencies, that had not been there five years' ago. The UEA would support the implementation of the plan as it was a resource base for the partner organisations with its strong multi-disciplinary science departments and expertise in running social engagement.

- **The East of England Regional Assembly compiled data on the environment across the six counties and had met regularly with environmental groups (RSPB, Natural Trust, Wildlife Trust, water companies and the farmers' unions) and was a forerunner of this environmental plan. The work had been lost with the abolition of the regional assemblies. The baseline had raised awareness but had not informed policy development. Will this evidenced plan influence urban development and transport planning? Wildlife East proposed that 25 per cent of land was put aside to increase natural capital.**

There would be a lot of changes to farming in the next year in accordance with proposals set out in the Environment and Agriculture Bills and opportunities for landowners and landlords to apply for funding for environmental schemes. The plan would provide the evidence base for funding for these environmental beneficial schemes.

In terms of geography, the plan provided evidence based on landscapes rather than geographical pockets of land, and enabled a joined up approach taking into account the interests of all organisations.

- **How can the county council be held to account to ensure that transport policies improve air quality in the city?**

The evidence base was important and powerful. The GIS mapping provided better information than was available five years' ago, and could demonstrate the levels of greenhouse gases and air pollution.

- **Baseline evidence was shifting but it was also about regeneration. There had been a general abundance of wildlife that had declined over the last fifty to one hundred years.**

The key elements of a plan for 25 years was to establish a set of indices to assess biodiversity and to provide a better framework for managing change.

- **A lesson learnt during the lockdown was that the wards in the city with the greatest levels of deprivation had the least access to green spaces.**

There was more data on green infrastructure available from the Ordnance Survey and official national statistics than there was three years' ago, which meant that small urban areas could now be mapped and provide evidence to address the need for green spaces.

- **How does the plan meet the trinity of “environment, society and economy” to be a balanced sustainable policy?**

The plan incorporated a wide range of interests and disciplines. Andrew Lovett was a geographer, experienced in human and economic geography and his work on this project surprised some of his colleagues who were experts on environmental issues. The LEP was primarily focused on economic development but interested in environmental issues for that to be sustainable. This connectivity was fundamental to the management of the counties' natural capital assets.

In terms of the implementation of transport, planning and other policies; it was necessary to work across administrative boundaries and take a holistic view of the landscape of the area, for instance, avoiding making a distinction of the coast and separating it from the landscape, and “building bridges” between different interests and organisations.

RESOLVED to

- (1) thank Professor Andrew Lovett for his presentation and attending the meeting;
- (2) note that the compendium will be available in the public domain and will be a useful resource to inform the development of the council's policies;
- (3) ask members who have questions on the plan, to email the environmental strategy manager.

(The committee had a short break at this point and reconvened with all members listed above as present.)

4. Carbon Footprint Report 2019 -20

The environmental strategy manager and environmental strategy officer presented the report and, together with the director of place, answered members' questions.

In reply to questions on achieving the council's targets, the environmental strategy manager explained that carbon offsetting was being used for the first time to support plans to achieve net zero by 2030. This was in recognition that it was now more difficult to go on having carbon reductions year on year as the council had been doing it for 12 years. Retrofitting of City Hall and the Halls was constrained by the building fabric of these listed buildings but technological advances in battery storage and hydrogen use could be developed and would reduce carbon use.

The director of place explained that for financial reasons the council would not be able to electrify the fleet immediately when taking over the joint ventures. He advised members that the new depot had been designed to deliver environmental

excellence. Following an ecological study of the site, there would be a damp area for amphibians, including newts, bat boxes and fruit trees, as well as providing facilities such as cycle parking and showers for staff use, advanced LED lighting and solar panels funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme fund. Battery storage would be taken forward in the next financial year.

Members were advised that in relation to sheltered housing, the proposal was to improve the fabric of sheltered housing and to replace gas boilers with more sustainable heating sources.

A member congratulated the environmental strategy team for their work in reducing carbon emissions.

Members were advised that the reduction in carbon emissions was being built into the council's contracts and this work was ongoing.

During discussion the director of place commented on the changes to working patterns this year, with more employees working at home and online meetings and that this had reduced the council's carbon footprint. It was probable that operations would be different in future years and the council was currently undergoing a transformation programme to reshape the way that it delivered services. This included an opportunity to reduce the council's carbon footprint through the review of the council's asset management strategy over the next seven years.

RESOLVED to note the report.

5. Future work programme

The chair asked members to email him with any topics that the members of the panel potential items for discussion at future panel meetings.

RESOLVED to ask members to email potential items for discussion at future panel meetings to the chair and environmental strategy manager.

CHAIR