



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

09:30 to 11:30

1 July 2020

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

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes held on 12 February 2020.

3. Environmental Strategy 2020-25

The chair introduced the report. He explained that this was the fourth environmental strategy and it had been near completion but had been delayed by 18 weeks due to the restrictions on public consultation surrounding the four elections that were held last year. He commended the environmental strategy manager and team for the production of this “superb plan” and the collation of the 107 responses whilst being redeployed to other duties and working at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He reminded members that the panel had considered the environmental strategy at a previous meeting and that the panel now had an opportunity to consider the consultation responses and to make recommendations to cabinet. The previous environmental strategy had been regularly monitored and this work contributed to the draft environmental strategy that was before the panel. He commended the environmental strategy team for the detailed analysis and response to the comments received during the consultation.

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and highlighted the consultation responses and the officer response, as set out in Appendix 2. The changes to the environmental strategy arising from the consultation were listed in the covering report. During the presentation he referred to the council’s carbon reduction campaigns and programmes over the last 10 years (appendix 2, paragraph 8.9) and said that the 45 per cent reduction had been revaluated at 48.5 per cent by last week, demonstrating that the council was on track for net zero target.

During discussion the environmental strategy manager, together with the director of place, answered members’ questions. Members generally welcomed the environmental strategy and thanked the environmental strategy manager and team.

A member suggested that given the length of time that it had taken to produce the strategy, the chair's foreword should be updated to reflect the current Covid-19 experience and provide more information about the changes that it had brought about and the opportunities that it had been presented. Ideally the strategy should be rewritten but she acknowledged that this would not be fair on the work that had already been undertaken but it would be an out-of-date strategy if it did not contain a reference to Covid-19 as going forward it would be a changed world. The environmental strategy manager pointed out where references to Covid-19 had been made in the strategy and said that the action plan had been updated to reflect that the council's Covid-19 recovery plan would inform the environmental strategy. Other members agreed with the chair that Covid-19 should be explicit in the foreword and that it presented opportunities for environmental improvements that should be taken forward.

A member also pointed out that the reference on page 27 of the strategy to a former sheriff in 2008 as Lord Mayor was inaccurate and should be amended. She also considered that the reference to an event 12 years ago was unnecessary. The vice chair said that the people's assembly had set the strategy in motion and that the council had declared a climate emergency and the actions set out in the strategy should be taken forward without delay.

A member referred to the ranking of the priorities and welcomed the opportunity to work with partners, both in the private and public sectors, and in the community. She said that there was a real opportunity to work with grass root communities which had emerged during the pandemic. Another member said that speaking of partners, it was his understanding that the Tyndall Centre had stated in January that it could not endorse the council's environmental strategy and asked for all references to the centre to be removed from the document before it was adopted by cabinet. The chair said that the Tyndall Centre would be contacted to investigate the councillor's comments. The environmental strategy manager confirmed that where the Tyndall Centre disagreed with the council, there had been an appropriate reference made in the strategy.

A member said that he was disappointed that the target had not been amended in the strategy and "was still business as usual" given that the Labour party and Green Party nationally sought a carbon zero target by 2030 for the UK. He recommended how the SCATTER pathway tool could be used more efficiently to assess how the council achieved reduced emissions. In Norwich emissions needed to be cut by 12.7 per cent year on year, which was better than average for the UK. He suggested that the SCATTER pathway tools should be used to create a quantifiable action plan to show the specific impact of actions on achieving the council's target. He said that this was what the tool was designed to do. He said that it was difficult to judge the impact of the action plan without information about the number of houses, etc. The chair said that he was concerned about setting year on year targets and preferred an incremental change over the period of the strategy. The vice chair said that the council should look at the overall target, which would not be a smooth curve but would be achieved within the period covered by the plan. The environmental strategy manager said that using the SCATTER tool to assess retrofitting of private sector housing would highlight where emissions needed to be reduced but did not provide the funding to carry it out.

A member said that the action plan was key. The city council's own emissions were less than 2 per cent of all emissions in Norwich as a whole. Some measures in the action plan would be expensive, such as retrofitting homes, but others would not be. She suggested that if the city council was to withdraw its support of the Western Link, it would not cost anything, but would send out a big signal of the council's support for the environment. She had asked two years ago there should be an adaptation strategy incorporated into the environmental strategy and said it was important that a strategy was developed. It was her view that it should be included in the environment strategy. Heat waves would be more frequent, and an adaptation strategy was therefore critical. The chair accepted the councillor's comment that she would write to the cabinet to explain her reasons for not being able to support the environmental strategy.

The environmental strategy manager said that the council would be updating its adaptation strategy using the new Met Office data set UKCIP18. This data set provided the latest data on the Met Office's predictions for the short, medium and long-term weather risks related to climate change. The council would use this data for a new LCLIP (Local Climate Impacts Profile) which would identify how climate change would affect council services and help inform the council's adaptation strategy. This report would be presented to the panel later in the year. He added that the SCATTER tool was in its first year of operation and it was unclear whether the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy would provide further funding to track progress.

(Councillor Stonard had left the meeting at this point.)

A member said that the council did need a quantifiable target plan based on year on year targets which had been provided by the Tyndall Centre who could provide the data. It was not about criticising the council but to check the scale of action that was needed. He suggested that the council use the same financial model as Solar Together for the retrofitting of private sector housing which should be self-funding. The chair said that this was part of the action for housing and was part of the integrated approach set out in the recovery plan. The environmental strategy manager said that there was eco-aggregator in the action plan. He said that there was a difference between the power of aggregation and a reverse auction, but he would look into it. The member also recommended that with regard to the new food economy, there should be a reference to Covid-19 to include a green recovery of the economy as we transition and proposed that there should be an expert on the project board.

Discussion ensued on the members' third recommendation that the council should use its commercial investments to transition to a greener economy. He suggested that other local authorities were doing this and there were opportunities to invest in sustainable energy such as solar energy and battery storage. It was noted that there had been a proposal at budget council on investment in battery storage. The environmental strategy manager said that the technology was improving but the commercial regulation changes and state aid rules could undermine the expected payback on the investment, and advised caution to ensure that investments were as solid as possible. The director of place said that the council's commercial property investment strategy already supported the environmental strategy by restricting investment in properties associated with unsustainable or unethical businesses. He said the council's commercial property investment activities had been paused and

the strategy would need to be reviewed in the light of the outcome of a government consultation on the use of finance from the Public Works Board. Any review of the commercial property investment strategy would examine further how to support ethical investment, to take into account the impact of Covid-19, and, look at a more sustainable investment strategy, both financially and environmentally, going forward. This was an action that the council would do and was not dependent on the environmental strategy's action plan.

A member referred to the comments that the city council was not doing enough for sustainable transport and pointed out that the council operated car parks in the city centre. She suggested that the council should consider alternative uses for the car parks. By removing the car parks, it would make it easier to introduce a car free city centre which would benefit health and equality of opportunity and reduce emissions. She said that the environmental strategy should promote more sustainable travel and go further than the 20mph suggested. The chair referred to pages 24 and 25 of the environmental strategy and said that the 2040 Vision would also improve sustainability. He also pointed out that the environmental strategy was to 2025 and that it included plans for public transport. A member also suggested that the car parks sites could provide alternative sources of revenue for the council.

A member commended the strategy and said that the details would be set out in individual projects on the action plan. He suggested that for future consultations, consideration was given to the difficulty presented to respondents in being asked to prioritise items from 1 to 10. He also asked the environmental strategy manager to check that the ENGIE was still operating, pointing out that post Covid-19 there would be a recession. He suggested that the government should provide funding and assist councils to achieve net zero earlier.

A member said that as a key part of the strategy was working with partners and there should be reference to the stakeholders. He also asked whether there could be a report to this panel on what the council and cabinet were doing to lobby government, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other organisations to increase funding for its carbon reduction plan and to achieve targets by 2030 rather than 2050. He also asked that the stakeholder's responses were published as part of the strategy. The director of place said that officers would investigate this request to ensure information released complied with relevant legislation and any assurances that had been given to the respondent. The member suggested that this could be as simple as writing to the partner stakeholders to seek their agreement.

During discussion, the chair listed the possible recommendations arising from the discussion. The director of place suggested that the recommendations were divided into comments on the environmental strategy and the other recommendations for actions arising from the debate, for instance the review of the commercial investment strategy. During discussion the panel debated the issues raised above. The chair took up the issue of using tools for quantitative assessments but suggested that rather than use these to assess actions against the action plan it should be part of environmental impact assessments made at the appropriate time during the decision-making process. Members also noted the governance arrangements for monitoring progress on the environmental strategy: through the terms of reference of this panel; reports to cabinet that were subject to scrutiny committee call-in and council; and, that there would be bi-annual and annual reporting of key performance indicators. In reply to a suggestion, the chair said that the council was lobbying the

government and the LEP for funding to achieve carbon reduction and that he did not consider that there needed to be reports on this. After some discussion it was noted that grass root groups were included in the strategy and therefore it did not need to be included in the foreword but that behavioural change arising from Covid-19 by increasing walking and cycling should. It was also suggested that “place making” needed an explanation in the glossary for members of the public. The director of place said that a huge proportion of council activities influence the current or future environment in Norwich. The environmental strategy manager confirmed that he would add something to explain this in the glossary. The chair said that he had also spoken to the environmental strategy manager about other explanations to be included in the glossary.

The chair agreed to that the panel would vote on each recommendation separately:

RESOLVED to:

- (1) on the chair’s casting vote, with 3 members voting in favour and 3 members voting against, to recommend the environmental strategy to cabinet for adoption, subject to an amendment to the chair’s foreword to contextualise the development of the strategic document within the events of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting behavioural changes leading to an increase in walking and cycling;
- (2) with 1 member abstaining from voting, to request cabinet that when conducting environmental assessments, the council applies SCATTER tools or other environmental assessment tools as appropriate to quantify the environmental impact of decision making;
- (3) unanimously, to request cabinet that if and when the council’s commercial property investment strategy is revised that CEEEP is involved in its preparation to ensure that opportunities to stimulate the green economy are maximised;
- (4) with 1 member abstaining from voting, to note that in accordance with the terms of reference of this panel, request that reports on the environmental strategy action plan are considered regularly, note the governance arrangements in place to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and to reaffirm that the council is committed to lobby the government for funding to achieve the carbon neutrality as soon as possible.

CHAIR