



Sustainable development panel

09:30 to 11:10

29 March 2017

Present: Councillors Bremner (chair), Grahame, Jackson, Jones (B)
(substitute for Councillor Herries), Maguire, Thomas (Va) and
Woollard (substitute for Councillor Brociek-Coulton)

Apologies Councillor Herries (vice chair), Brociek-Coulton and Lubbock

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on
22 February 2017.

3. Greater Norwich Local Plan Progress Report

The Greater Norwich planning policy team manager presented the appended report. At its meeting on 22 March 2017, the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) had agreed the recommendations in the report. The GNDP had discussed the evidence base and the need for a countywide protocol to ensure that planners worked with health professionals to ensure that there was adequate health care facilities. There had been two questions to the GNDP.

Councillor Carlo had referred to people travelling to work by car to Norwich Research Park and Broadland Business Park and asked how the Greater Norwich local plan (GNLP) would do to promote sustainable travel to these suburban business parks. The planning policy team manager said that like out of town retail centres it was more sustainable to promote city centres for employment where there was good public transport available.

County Councillor Boswell had asked about the sustainable appraisal scoping report and the interpretation of carbon emissions. The response to his question had been that it was not necessary to set numerical target.

Discussion ensued in which the planning policy team manager answered members' questions. Brexit and its impact would be a challenge but it would be factored into the employment evidence. The GNDP members had received an informal presentation on the economic and employment evidence which would be published on the website in due course.

Members were advised that the establishment of green infrastructure and a high level of open space had been part of the Joint Core Strategy which would be carried forward into the GNLP. A member suggested that growing food locally should be included in the plan. The planning policy team manager explained that the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) was actively campaigning to establish a Green Belt around Norwich which would prevent urban sprawl into the countryside.

In reply to a member's suggestion, the planning policy team manager said that it would be worth considering a reference to equality of access in the vision and objective section of the plan. The chair said that the city council required 10 per cent of dwellings in developments of over ten dwellings to be adaptable for disabled people. The city council hoped to influence the other two district council where the policy did not apply.

Members noted that the Housing White Paper would introduce a national standard methodology for assessment of housing need and that a percentage of this would be affordable housing.

RESOLVED to note the progress on the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

4. Norwich City Council HECA 2017-2019

The environmental strategy manager and the environmental strategy officer presented the report and answered members' questions.. The report contributed to the council's corporate priority to 'make Norwich a prosperous city'

Discussion ensued. The environmental strategy manager said that there were more deaths resulting from fuel poverty than road accidents. It was a national scandal that more people were dying of fuel poverty than traffic accidents. The environmental strategy officer pointed out that the city council had bucked national trends and through a series of initiatives had reduced fuel poverty levels to 10.5 per cent. The panel noted that there were pockets of fuel poverty in all wards. The panel noted the anomaly of houses, particularly in Nelson Ward, appearing to have a high income when it was in fact a shared student house and the total income comprised the total of each of the students' grants. There were also a large number of Victorian houses in multiple-occupation which were poorly insulated and difficult to heat.

During the presentation the panel noted the government's changes to solar power feed in tariffs making it more expensive for businesses and other organisations thus making it a less attractive form of energy.

The chair referred to the eco awards and asked that information could be shared about the measures that the winner had introduced into the outstanding work to a small terrace house. This could be a beacon to other householders and private landlords.

Councillor Thomas, cabinet member for fairness and equality, referred to his foreword and said that it was a good report. He spoke about his frustration that there were deaths from fuel poverty and the way that national performance indicators required household income to be assessed for student houses. He also considered that Switch & Save had helped lots of households save money and energy.

During discussion members considered whether the needs to provide residents with adequate insulation could outweigh the considerations of maintaining original architecture in a conservation area. Members noted that this was an issue in Mile Cross where there were high levels of deprivation and houses with tiled walls on the upper floors. External insulation would change the appearance and members considered that there needed to be a balance because insulation would help conserve energy and reduce fuel costs to the residents. Members considered people had a right to keep warm in a well-insulated home.

The panel discussed students often paying higher rates for their energy because landlords did not review their energy suppliers and students were unaware of Switch & Save. It was also noted that it was possible to shop around for deals for pre-paid meters. The environmental strategy manager said that they did do a promotion at the university and that this could be pursued.

A member pointed out that data should be shared with health providers to prevent deaths from fuel poverty and that there was a correlation with food poverty as people either chose to “eat or heat”. Members were advised that strategic housing did work with health providers to improve private sector housing. The private rented sector property registration scheme required landlords to provide minimum standards which included energy efficiency and heating. The environmental strategy officer pointed out that the line “to ensure the council’s private landlord accreditation scheme promotes energy efficiency” on page 87 of the agenda papers should be deleted.

A member asked a number of questions about the projects and pointing out a typographical error in the 2017 update on air source heat pumps by deleting the word “was” between “connectivity” and “available” and replacing it with “it was” (top of page 80 of the agenda papers) and that the 2017 update for new council homes to achieve high energy efficiency standards still said “to be updated”. The environmental strategy manager said that Passivhaus standard houses had been built and that this was still being assessed given the changes to the housing revenue account.

In reply to a question the environmental strategy manager said that district heating scheme proposed as part of the proposal for the Utilities site had not been viable. The River Wensum heat source project was considered viable.

The environmental strategy manager said that strategic housing worked with all groups and were particularly trying to engage with landlords to bring private sector housing up to standard. Members should contact Paul Swanborough, the private sector housing manager, if they were aware of any tenants’ groups that should be consulted.

In reply to a question the environmental strategy manager said that there was no standardised green tariff which made it difficult to compare one against another. Most people just wanted to reduce their energy bills. The big six energy companies could provide energy at a lower cost because of economies of scale. Some authorities had formed energy companies to provide energy to residents.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report;

- (2) ask the environmental strategy manager to arrange for a copy of the presentation on the eco-award terrace house to be circulated to members;
- (3) ask the environmental strategy manager to liaise with colleagues to advise them of the concerns that the members have about ensuring that all council houses have adequate insulation and to investigate ways of retrofitting houses in conservation areas.

CHAIR