

Sustainable development panel**09:00 to 11:35****25 February 2015**

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Ackroyd, Bogelein, Bremner, Herries, Jackson and Stammers (substitute for Councillor Boswell)

Apologies: Councillor Boswell

1. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2015, subject to requesting that “planning applications committee” was deleted from the headers of pages 2 to 6 and replaced with sustainable development panel.

2. Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) report 2015 -progress report

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and, together with the environmental strategy officer and housing strategy officer, answered members’ questions.

During discussion members considered that the annotation of some of the tables and graphs in the report should be improved to make it explicit, ie, stating where data was *per capita* etc.

Discussion ensued on the council’s work to improve energy efficiency and keep people warm throughout the city, through the Switch & Save and the initiatives. Members noted that incidences of fuel poverty did not necessarily correlate with the standard of housing but with a person’s ability to afford heating. However the panel noted that improved energy efficiency made heating more efficient and therefore reduced heating costs and occurrences of fuel poverty. A member suggested that it would be useful if national data for fuel poverty was included to compare the city’s performance. The environmental strategy manager undertook to investigate whether data was available in a suitable format.

The panel considered the low uptake of government grants for energy-saving measures in homes and that this could be attributed to the urban nature of the city, with an older housing stock and a high proportion of flats; that many households had already carried out loft and cavity wall insulation where appropriate; and the type of ownership or tenure of households. Members also noted that it was difficult to make a direct comparison with other areas of the UK because of regional differences in buildings and affluence. The environmental strategy manager explained that the cost of an evaluation was £50 which was subsidised and that the fee ensured that people were genuinely considering energy efficiency measures for their homes. The

panel considered that the council should look to make comparisons with authorities with a good performance record for take up of government grants and learn from their good practice to promote uptake in the city.

Discussion ensued on the measures to improve the council's housing stock. It was noted that where applicable the council sought out available grants to improve energy efficiency in its properties. The council was seeking tenders to place solar panels on some of its housing stock which would encourage greater take-up. Members considered whether the Norwich Standard for council housing included energy efficient measures and that it should be an aspiration for the council. Members considered that the external cladding of steel frame buildings contributed to improved energy efficiency. The council would be trialling the use of solar photovoltaic panels on some council houses with a view to extending this to other properties.

The panel considered the measures that the council had taken to reduce its carbon footprint and noted that the council published the data in its annual environmental statement.

RESOLVED, having considered the report, to recommend it to cabinet subject to asking:

- (1) cabinet to consider that energy efficiency measures should be part of the Norwich Standard and how it could be implemented if not already incorporated in the standard for council housing;
- (2) the environmental strategy manager to investigate data sources:
 - (a) to demonstrate where the Norwich sits nationally for levels of fuel poverty;
 - (b) for best practice of areas where there has been greater motivation by householders and private rented landlords to take up government grants for energy efficiency measures;
 - (c) amend the annotations to graphs to make the data explicit.

3. One Planet Norwich Sustainable Living Festival 2015

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and explained that the date for this family orientated event had been based on the availability of the venue which also coincided with Climate Change week. Further information about the event would be publicised on the council's website and e-councillor.

The panel noted that the sustainable living festival was likely to be an annual event and would be an opportunity to publicise the council's eco awards.

RESOLVED to note the report.

4. Affordable housing supplementary planning document

The planner (policy) presented the report and together with the head of planning services answered members' questions.

The panel considered the changes to the supplementary planning document (SPD) and commended the officers for their solutions within the constraints of the government's National planning policy framework (NPPF). There were two significant changes to the SPD. The first was to change the area within which commuted sums would be spent from 1km, which was considered to be too restrictive, to the same or adjacent ward. The benefit of this was to encourage affordable housing, within balanced and mixed communities. The second significant amendment was a simplified formula to calculate the "vacant building credit" which had been based on a suggestion from a respondent to the re-consultation and was considered to be simpler and more effective.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the Affordable housing supplementary planning document with proposed amendments;
- (2) recommend cabinet to approve the document as amended for formal adoption as a supplementary planning document in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Planning Regulations (2012).
- (3) record the panel's gratitude to Sarah Ashurst, planner (policy), who is leaving the council to take a new post.

5. Response to government consultation 'Building more homes on brownfield land'

The planning policy team leader (projects) presented the report and provided further clarity on the government's proposals following a Planning Advisory Service seminar she had attended since drafting the report.

During discussion the planning policy team leader (projects), together with the head of planning services and planner (policy), answered members' questions. The requirement of local planning authorities to progress local development orders undermined the local plan process and there was uncertainty about the ability to deliver affordable housing and infrastructure. Members noted that local development orders were part of a range of different measures to deliver housing but should not be mandatory. The panel also noted that the consultation period of 6 weeks was not sufficient to provide a detailed response to the consultation.

RESOLVED to approve the recommended approach to the consultation and to ask the head of planning services to circulate the draft response to the consultation to members of the panel for comment/information.

6. Possible formal co-operation on strategic planning issues through a shared non-statutory strategic framework

The planning policy team leader presented the report.

Discussion ensued on the composition of the Norfolk Duty to Cooperate (DtC) member forum, its terms of reference and governance arrangements and whether the meetings would be held in public. The terms of reference for the forum were currently being developed. Some panel members expressed concern about the democratic process and that there was not cross-party representation on the member forum. It was noted that the city council appointed a cabinet member as its representative. The city council would make critical decisions at its cabinet and council meetings. It was a balancing act of meeting the duty to co-operate by ensuring that there was wider discussion within the authority. Another member suggested that as the panel was discussing the principles for the non-strategic framework at this meeting it demonstrated that there was cross party consultation on such matters.

RESOLVED to note the report and to recommend to cabinet at its meeting on 11 March 2015, that it supports the principle of co-operation through option 3 – formal cooperation through a shared non-statutory strategic framework.

CHAIR