



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

09:30 to 11:35

12 February 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

Environment Strategy

The chair explained that the consultation on environmental strategy had closed on Friday, 7 February. There had been an overwhelming response. It would take time to analyse the responses and review the draft strategy. The environmental strategy manager said that cabinet would consider adopting the strategy on 10 June 2020. The committee officer would circulate copies of the cabinet report to members of the climate and environment emergency executive panel in advance of this meeting.

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes held on 18 December 2019.

3. Strategic Frameworks

The strategy manager gave a presentation. He explained that the purpose of the presentation was to outline the existing strategic frameworks within which the panel could make recommendations to cabinet for the deployment of council resources in response to the climate and biodiversity emergency. (Copies of the presentation are available on the council's website with the documents for this meeting.)

(The panel then split into two groups for a 15 minute period to conduct an exercise to apply the framework for making recommendations to cabinet. The strategy manager suggested that retrofitting private sector housing had the potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions and make an impact on achieving the Paris Agreement target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Whilst the adoption of a plant based diet would make greater impact in reducing carbon emissions, the council would not be able to control or evaluate the outcome.)

The vice chair reported back on behalf of the first group and commented on the usefulness of the framework to make recommendations on actions or policies, which had the greatest impact or influence so that the maximum could be achieved within

the council's limited resources. The three pillars of analysis, economic, social and environment, demonstrated that environment was integral to everything that the council did. The group had a general discussion rather than just on the "exam question". The group had considered that the cost of retrofitting private sector housing was beyond the council's ability but that it could use its influence to secure external funding as it would be significant in carbon emission reduction and as a long-term project would benefit residents and the local economy. The group also considered that the council could use its influence in the local economy and Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, to fill skill gaps in the construction industry and manufacturing by creating opportunities for training and apprenticeships to provide jobs for local people and use locally produced materials. Norwich Regeneration Ltd could be the vehicle that would drive this forward. Members had also commented that there was potential to use local community groups, such as Norwich Community Solar. The vice chair said that modular kitchen units had been used in the council's Bullard Road development. Due to the high specifications, it had been difficult to procure these locally and it was therefore an ambition to produce modular housing and units locally. A member suggested that the panel undertook a visit to Leeds to see the production of prefabricated housing modules. The group had also commented on the potential for renewable heat sources to serve communities. The council should continue to use its influence with its neighbouring authorities to drive forward its ambitions for sustainable transport. The group considered that the licensing of private sector housing would ensure that accredited accommodation was a high standard but there was concern that it would exacerbate inequality with unlicensed properties. Members also commented that the council should reconsider the policy to lease its roof spaces for solar panels. The environmental strategy manager advised members that earlier attempts had not been implemented because of government reductions to the feed-in tariffs, making schemes unviable. There was an opportunity to install Tesla roof tiles over entire roofs to create energy stations.

The second group reported that they had also been less focussed on the objective of the exercise but had considered resources and constraints in a number of areas where the council could either provide or influence carbon reduction. The group had noted that by 2025, the government had banned the installation of gas boilers in new builds. Members considered what constraints were in place to phase these earlier and whether it would be realistic and enforceable. Members also considered how private sector housing could be improved, as some older properties were cold and damp, and there was potential to use air source heat pumps where practical. Members also considered that given the climate and environment emergency, the council had the potential to influence the other local authorities in the Greater Norwich Development Partnership and produce exemplar policies through its supplementary planning guidance. Transport issues also impinged on all of these factors.

The strategy manager by way of conclusion referred to the exercise and said that the framework was a useful tool for the panel to consider its recommendations to cabinet and the approach that the panel could use for the actions within the environmental strategy and the wider work on the environment within the core strategy of the council.

During discussion a member expressed concern that greater weight should be given to the climate and environment emergency to reflect its urgency and pointed out that the earth's resources were finite and should not be depleted further. The strategy

manager commented on the application of Kate Raworth's "doughnut model", produced for Oxfam ahead of the Rio summit 2012, which demonstrated that well planned policies for inclusive growth would not be to the detriment of the environment and could be applied from a macroeconomic to local level. He referred to the invidious situation of the present and future as demonstrated by the NHS where it needs to use equipment for life saving at the detriment of saving carbon emissions. The cost of losing lives to reduce carbon emissions was not viable. Members commented that there were often trade-offs for economic expansion, contrary to the framework, such as the expansion of Heathrow and that in future greater consideration should be made in transport policies as to whether roads or airports were required, as it was not sustainable. A member also pointed out that, similarly, developers should construct buildings to the highest standards of energy efficiency available rather than being deterred by production costs. It was considered that these were areas where the council could use its influence in the development of the Greater Norwich Local Plan and with its other partners, such as the Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. A member suggested that economic growth was not a "dirty" word and that it could be environmentally sustainable. He argued that the retrofitting of housing would create "green" jobs in the local area bringing wealth into the local economy. In reply to a question, he said that retail contributed to the viability and diversity in the city centre, which was a sustainable location. The strategy manager said that this was a paradigm of the society that we lived in and the council could also encourage and inform people to reuse, recycle as much as possible. A member pointed out that if carbon neutrality was to be achieved then it would be necessary for the council to use its influence where it would have most traction.

The strategy manager advised the panel that when framing recommendations to cabinet it should be clear where the council could have a role to play or the most influence, or where the council's resources could be best used and would be most likely to have a tangible outcome. He said that there was an opportunity to build on the retrofitting of private sector housing and to include it in the future work plan for the committee. The environmental strategy manager referred to the discussions at the two previous meetings of the panel and said that the next step was to consider the work programme for the future meetings. He confirmed that the biodiversity strategy would be presented to the panel. A member suggested that a citizen's assembly should be considered so that the views of members of the public could be considered. Members commented that the application of the policy framework and exercise had been useful. The environmental strategy manager asked that members took into consideration the resources available to the council, adding that the environmental strategy team was a small one. He referred members to the scatter tool, and said that proposals needed to be targeted where the greatest impact could be made and to make the best use of officer time.

RESOLVED to

- (1) thank the strategy manager for the presentation;
- (2) note the framework for developing sustainable policies and proposals;
- (3) consider the work programme for the panel at the next meeting.

CHAIR