



**Sustainable development panel**

**09:30 to 11:50**

**28 September 2016**

Present: Councillors Bremner (chair), Brociek-Coulton, Davis (substitute for councillor Maguire) (to the middle of item 5, below), Grahame, Jackson, Jones (B) (substitute for Councillor Herries), Lubbock and Woollard (substitute for Councillor Thomas (Va))

Apologies Councillor Herries (vice chair), Maguire and Thomas (Va)

**1. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Davis declared an other interest in item 6 (below), Updated Affordable Warmth Strategy (applicant for one of the schemes).

**2. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2016.

**3. Statement of Community Involvement – post consultation changes**

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

The chair noted that responses had been received from neighbouring councils, parish councils, the Green Party and other organisations.

During discussion members considered the most significant change in relation to consultations on planning policy documents over holiday periods and the consultation responses from Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council. The head of planning explained that prohibiting consultation during August would delay the production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The city council had a six-week purdah period three years out of four when a city council election was held. This meant that the decision making process was delayed until June or July and by not allowing consultation during August meant consultations would not commence until September.

In reply to a member's question regarding the application of fourteen extra days at Christmas and Easter, the planner explained that this might be too much but that there would be an extra day of consultation on development planning documents for each bank holiday that fell in the period. Another member considered that people tended to be away for lengthy periods during the summer months and that the application of extra days should not be discretionary but stipulated in the statement.

Discussion ensued on the development of the public access application tracking and notification system to automate email notifications of any progress to interested parties when a new document has been added to a planning application, including committee or officer reports and revised plans. The panel noted the difficulties with tracking documents and compatibility of other council systems with the public access system and that there were discussions with the software providers to overcome technical issues. The council did not have the resources to send letters to people who had made representations on planning applications to advise them that it was being considered at committee or had been approved under delegated powers. The onus was on individuals to follow the progress of the application. Automatic emails would help this process. A member pointed out that people who did not have access to computers would be disadvantaged and it was agreed to ensure that letters included information about the availability of computers to access the council's website at City Hall.

The head of planning services said that developers were encouraged to keep interested parties informed of the outcome of pre-application consultations. Notification by email through the planning access system would also address this when documents were loaded on to the system.

The panel also discussed accessibility to the planning portal and difficulty of use and being "timed out". The head of planning suggested that a demonstration on using the public access system would be included in the members' training on planning applications (1 November at 18:00). The panel noted the role of councillors in keeping their constituents up to date on planning applications in their wards. One member said that she found it useful to keep in touch with the case officer and then emailed details to members of the public interested in the planning application.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) note the Statement of Community Involvement with proposed amendments made in response to consultation;
- (2) recommend that cabinet approves the document as amended for formal adoption.

**4. Greater Norwich Local Plan update**

The head of planning services said that an officer from Broadland District Council, who was seconded to the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) had intended to attend this meeting to update members on the progress of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), but due to ill health had sent apologies.

The head of planning services presented the report and answered members' questions but said that he would attempt to answer questions and if necessary refer questions to the GNDP officers for a response. In his introduction he advised members of the timescale for the delivery of the GNLP for adoption in 2020 and said that with the rapidity and scale of changes to the national planning system there was a degree of uncertainty as to whether this timetable would be delivered. He explained that the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) had taken eleven years from its commencement in 2007 to adoption in its final form in 2014 and would expire in 2026. The city council had completed its development management policies and site

allocation plan since 2014, as had South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council. The development of the GNLP would be a different process with planning strategy merged with site allocation and would supersede the JCS and site allocation plans for the city council, Broadland and South Norfolk. The plan would identify housing sites until 2036. It was important to demonstrate the five year land supply when assessing planning applications.

The head of planning said that the GNDP was an advisory group with decisions made at member level by each individual council. Officers from each of the three councils had been pooled into a central team which was being managed by the city council's planning policy team leader, Mike Burrell. The director of regeneration and development was on the officer steering group. Reports would be considered by this panel before consideration for decision at cabinet and/or council as appropriate.

During discussion the head of planning services answered members' questions. The panel commented that the council had worked in partnership with the other councils since 2007 and had received national recognition as an exemplar of good practice. There was an acknowledged risk that any one council could veto the adoption of the plan or elements of the plan but this was considered to be unlikely as proposals would be based on shared evidence. A member expressed concern that by the time the council adopted the plan the decision would have been essentially made. Unlike the other two district councils the city council did not have parish councils and unless members were on this panel they could not contribute to decisions at an earlier stage in the development of the plan. However another member considered that the pragmatic approach was to work with the existing structure within the council and the GNDP partners to ensure that there was consensus on the GNLP. She pointed out the greater risk to sustainable development was to have no plan at all.

Councillor Jackson referred to issues he had raised at a shadow portfolio meeting and expressed disappointment that he could not raise his concerns about the sustainable appraisal report and site allocations directly to an officer of the GNDP. The head of planning services asked members to forward queries to him and he would collate them and liaise with the officer team at GNDP for responses. The call for sites was an ongoing process and would be followed by an analysis of the sites put forward. The issues paper had been considered earlier in the year.

Members noted that workshops were being organised as part of the development of the plan and considered that it would be useful for a specific briefing for councillors, including county councillor for the Norwich divisions, on the development of the GNLP, and to invite county councillors of the Norwich Divisions.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) note the progress on the Greater Norwich Local Plan;
- (2) the content of the stakeholder issues paper and ask members to advise the head of planning if they require clarification on any issues raised;
- (3) ask officers to arrange an all member briefing on the Greater Norwich Development Plan and invite county councillors for the Norwich divisions to attend.

## **5. Annual Carbon Footprint Exercise**

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

Members noted that the council was close to achieving its 40 per cent carbon emissions reduction target set in the council's 2015-18 environmental strategy.

During discussion the panel commented on the energy saving projects to reduce gas consumption in sheltered housing and noted that heat had been lost through external pipe work. The panel noted that the council relied on data from contractors and that the data in relation to reduction in gas use by contractors was 30 per cent against the average for the last three years suggesting that data provided in the past had on occasion been inaccurate.

The environmental strategy manager said that vehicles used by housing services would be integrated into the main fleet. This would be a one fleet solution for the council and reduce the fleet by 20 per cent which would make a difference in the council's carbon footprint in future years. The council was in the process of procuring a new fleet. The cost of electric cars had come down in recent years and it was hoped that this would be reflected in the cost of hire vehicles.

Members sought confirmation that the council's rationalisation of its assets was reflected in the figures and units were measured individually.

During discussion members expressed their frustration that the council could not claim the CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction by purchasing electricity through a green tariff because there was no definitive answer from Ofgem, DECC and Carbon Smart on the mechanisms or tariffs that would allow the council to do so, and noted that officers were continuing to pursue this.

The chair said that whether the figures were 39.5 per cent or 36 per cent there was been a reduction in the council's CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction. He thanked all the environmental management team and all the officers of the council for their contribution.

The environmental strategy manager said that The Halls were given a B rating which could be due to the thickness of the walls and that the officers were careful about putting on the heating.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **6. Update on Affordable Warmth Strategy**

(Councillor Davis had declared an interest in this item.)

The environmental strategy officer presented the report and the appended strategy, and together with the environmental strategy manager, answered questions. The reduction of fuel poverty was a key corporate priority and there was concern that the most vulnerable would become more so in the current economic climate.

During discussion members noted that there were pockets of deprivation within wards and that information on a polling district basis would be useful for ward

councillors so that they could ensure that target residents who could benefit from the schemes. The panel also noted that annotation on the graph, in relation to the ward names, needed to be corrected as it was not clear which ward the data referred to.

Members noted that British Gas had provided £500,000 for a boiler replacement scheme and that this would be available to both householders and tenants, who would benefit from having an efficient boiler and reduced energy costs.

A member referred to the upgrade of bathrooms in council housing and suggested that the policy should be reviewed and showers installed. This would save on the energy bills but also prevent the indignity of older residents who could not get into the bath and maintain their independence. The chair said that he would raise this with the cabinet member for housing. Another member said that she considered that tenants would support this

The environmental strategy officer said that the strategy would be launched at the Winter Wellbeing event which would be held from 10:00 to 13:00 on Tuesday, 4 October 2016 at St Andrew's Hall.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

CHAIR