



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

16:00 to 17:15

28 June 2022

Present: Councillors Hampton (chair following appointment), Stutely (vice chair following appointment), Carlo, Champion, Lubbock, Oliver and Padda

Also present: Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing

1. Appointment of Chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Hampton, as the chair for the ensuing civic year.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Nominations were received for Councillors Carlo and Stutely to be appointed as vice chair, and on being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Stutely, as the vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022.

5. Biodiversity Strategy 2022 – 2032 Pre consultation Discussion

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing, gave a presentation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy would be subject to consultation and considered at cabinet in November 2022. (A copy [presentation](#) is available on the council's website with the papers for this meeting.) He thanked the environmental strategy manager and colleagues for their contribution in drafting the strategy.

During discussion, the cabinet member for community wellbeing, together with the head of strategy, engagement and culture, the head of planning and regulatory services, the head of environmental services and the environmental strategy manager, answered members' questions.

Members welcomed the strategy which they considered was a helpful document. Members commented that an action plan to accompany the strategy would provide a fuller picture and be easier for people to understand. The cabinet member for community wellbeing confirmed that the strategy set the overall framework and objectives. Work was ongoing to develop the biodiversity action plan that would sit beneath it. Resources for the baseline survey had been approved at the budget council (February 2022).

In reply to a member's question, the head of strategy, engagement and culture said that the intention was for the strategy to be reviewed by University of East Anglia academics through the consultation process. Members noted the ongoing work of the community enabling team to engage residents, including hard to reach groups, to better understand their views and concerns. Various projects were underway, and it was hoped that further external funding would be available to extend these trials. The data from the trials would feed into the planned biodiversity consultation.

During discussion, a member commented on the importance of developer contributions to achieve the ambitions of the strategy and suggesting that £300,000 contribution to date did not seem a lot given the length of time that the community infrastructure levy (CIL) scheme had been available. Members were advised that the strategy provided examples of schemes that had been carried out and it did not represent the totality of schemes to enhance biodiversity that had been funded by CIL, or other sources of funding, in the city.

A member expressed her concern about the effectiveness of the strategy as she considered that previous policies and strategies had not been successful, citing the loss of designated green spaces to development or hard surfacing: that green walls or roofs had not been implemented; the Southern Bypass and Northern Distributor Road acted as a barrier to biodiversity, and that policy focused on green infrastructure links through cycle or riverside walks, rather than dedicated ecological green corridors. The head of planning and regulatory services said that the Environment Act 2021 was a step change in that it required developers to make a 10 per cent contribution to biodiversity net gain which would strengthen development plans and local planning policies. In addition, to the developers' contributions, Nutrient Neutrality would also require other environmental mitigation. The baseline survey would contribute to the evidence base for the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which would be part of the Greater Norwich Local Plan, and used to monitor species, flora and fauna and identify gaps, with further opportunities to enhance biodiversity through development management policies at local level. This would be a real opportunity to enhance biodiversity, including working with Norwich Fringe, to maintain small pockets of land. Cycle and riverside walks had contributed to green infrastructure links. The River Wensum Strategy had been reviewed to include biodiversity. Developer contributions could be used for ecological green corridors to strengthen these links.

Members were advised that the expectation was that the biodiversity strategy specifically aimed to create new green space as part of the development of the Nature Recovery Network (NDR) as set out in paragraph 9.1 of the strategy.

In reply to a member's question, the environmental strategy manager explained that parish councils had been included in the list of consultees as part of the wider consultation beyond the boundaries of the city council. A member suggested that

the National Trust be included because of its involvement in the creation of green corridors at Bath. Members also noted that the River Wensum Strategy Partnership was chaired by the council but that it had a separate working group that should be consulted.

Discussion ensued on the methodology to be used for the baseline survey. The head of planning and regulatory services confirmed that the budget of £30,000 was sufficient for a qualified ecologist to conduct a full habitat survey of the city. The brief would be considered by the sustainable development panel. A member pointed out the importance of small patches of rough ground which were often lost to development. Oxford City Council provided information on land uses, including green infrastructure, at ward level as part of its environmental strategy. The head of planning and regulatory services said that the council had a lot of information on land use and would contact colleagues at Oxford for further details. A member pointed out that the design and conservation manager and team had undertaken a mapping exercise during the pandemic. A member pointed out that Plymouth had also produced similar information. The panel also noted that the survey needed to be robust as the action plan would be informed by the data and evidence in the survey.

During discussion, the panel noted that there had been incidences where front-line staff had used pesticides or cut grass unnecessarily. Members were advised that making sure that staff understood the strategy as a key objective of the council and understood their role in delivery would be a key aim. The head of environmental services confirmed that the company would be working with the environmental strategy team to enhance biodiversity and review maintenance methods by the end of the year, and staff training would be provided. A member commented that the county council's highways maintenance staff had cut grass verges in her ward where residents had planted wildflowers and said that it was important that members of the public were not discouraged from enhancing biodiversity. Officers confirmed that Norfolk County Council was a key partner in the green infrastructure mapping exercise and the Natural Recovery Areas and members' concerns would be fed back to colleagues at the county.

In reply to a member's question, the head of planning and regulatory services said that biodiversity did not negate the council's responsibility for antisocial behaviour. The head of environment said concerns had been raised on individual schemes but following implementation there had been no increase of antisocial behaviour.

The Green group members on the panel said that they hoped that the Biodiversity Strategy would help reverse the decline in biodiversity, previous strategies with the same objectives have not been effective. The council needed to work in partnership with the neighbouring councils. The head of planning and regulatory services said that the council could not be responsible for other authorities but the Environment Act and working in partnership to deliver the Greater Norwich Local Plan for adoption in 2023, they could influence the partnership authorities.

The panel was advised that the proposal for "citizen scientists" had originated at the consultation event at the Halls, and that it was hoped some citizen science could be taken forward as part of this strategy. Members commented on the trend for the use of hard surfacing, decking and artificial grass in gardens that had contributed to areas of the city being designated Critical Drainage Areas, such as Nelson Ward, and the need to promote biodiversity to residents. The head of strategy,

engagement and culture said that the communications and engagement campaign associated with the strategy would raise awareness. Joined up action by residents would make a difference and would be part of the action plan.

The head of strategy, engagement and culture confirmed that the biodiversity working group would comprise officers across the council. The environmental strategy team was now within the strategy, engagement and culture service which reflected that environmental strategy was central to the core strategy and co-ordinated across the wider organisation.

Councillor Champion commented that there had been a decline in biodiversity of 68 per cent over the last 50 years. He asked that the strategy be more ambitious as the 10 per cent increase in biodiversity would not address this. Habitats would adapt in response to climate change, and this would require planting of species that could adjust. Officers noted these comments as part of the consultation.

RESOLVED to note the report.

CHAIR