

Sustainable development panel**09:30 to 10:30****25 March 2015**

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

Apologies: Councillor Boswell

1. Declaration of interest

Councillor Bogelein declared an other interest in item 4 (below), Planning policy options for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) because she lived in an HMO and her partner was a landlord of an HMO.

2. Minutes**One Planet Norwich Sustainable Living Festival 2015**

Members considered that the event had been successful and noted that over 5,000 people had attended on the Saturday and 1,500 on Sunday. The event would be repeated next year and possibly opened by the Lord Mayor or Sheriff if it were practical to do so as it was in a public building.

The panel thanked the environmental strategy manager and other officers for arranging the event.

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2015.

3. Collective solar panel purchasing (public auction)

The chair introduced the report and said that, at its meeting on 11 March 2015, the cabinet had agreed the arrangements for a collective solar panel purchasing auction. The council would be first local authority to hold a solar panel auction in the UK and plans to ask other Norfolk district councils to join.

The environmental strategy manager referred to the report and gave a power point presentation.

Discussion ensued in which the panel welcomed the initiative which would help residents to install solar panels and gave assurance of the quality of the product. Members noted that, in order to benefit from solar panels, houses had to be energy efficient. Cosy City funding could help bring houses up to standard. Surveys were

discounted and ensured that the properties were suitable and structurally sound. The environmental strategy manager said that the business plan took into consideration that around 20% of households assessed for solar panels would not follow through with the installation and a large proportion of these would be for financial reasons.

During discussion, the panel considered how residents could be helped to finance solar panels and noted that the environmental strategy manager had liaised with the council's financial inclusion manager. Like Switch and Save, collective solar panel purchasing helped residents to access solar panels at a reduced rate and would also reduce their carbon footprint.

The panel noted that the council was currently conducting a pilot scheme of solar panels on council housing with a view to rolling it out across the housing stock.

RESOLVED to note the report.

4. Planning policy options for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

(Councillor Bogelein had declared an other interest in this item.)

(Several members of the public, representing the Eastern Landlords Association, University of East Anglia Students Union and a landlord attended the meeting for this item.)

The planning policy team leader and the head of planning services presented the report and answered members' questions.

Discussion ensued in which members considered the concerns of local residents and the need for houses in multiple occupation to provide accommodation for students and, increasingly in the current economic climate, people who could not afford other types of accommodation. The panel concurred with consultation option 4, as set out in the report, which would promote the development of accommodation types that reduced the demand for conversion of existing houses to HMOs. The panel noted that the University of East Anglia (UEA) was committed to providing more purpose built student accommodation and that private sector purpose built student accommodation had been developed in the city centre.

Members considered consultation option 2(a), as set out in the report, and noted that the application of thresholds was difficult to apply just on a ward basis because of concentrations of HMOs in particular streets because of location and type of housing; and that there were areas where the high density of HMOs crossed ward boundaries. It was noted that Nelson ward had the highest concentration of HMOs in the city and that there were also high concentrations in University, Bowthorpe, Eaton and Wensum wards.

Discussion ensued in which members noted the concerns of residents in areas where there was a high concentration of student occupied HMOs, which included anti-social behaviour, problems with using refuse and recycling bins, loss of amenity and exacerbation of car parking problems. Members noted that problems were often

not reported to the council and therefore could not be addressed. The council did not have a dedicated student liaison officer, however, as the issues affected the local community it was appropriate that issues should be dealt with by the neighbourhood teams. It was also noted that the environmental services development team did a lot of work with the UEA and students to explain the use of refuse and recycling bins.

A member proposed that given the concerns about the concentration of HMOs in certain wards, the proposal to address this through an Article 4 Direction and the introduction of thresholds should be brought forward to 2016. However, the head of planning services explained that there needed to be time to assess the housing accreditation and licensing options before progressing policy restrictions on new HMOs in wards and areas with high concentrations of HMOs through an Article 4 Directive. It would not be possible to provide the evidence base for this and undergo the processes involved for the Article 4 Directive in a shorter time period. There would also be an opportunity to assess the impact of purpose built student accommodation on the growth of HMOs in the city.

Discussion ensued in which members considered that the panel should receive an interim report on progress in 2016.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note that:
 - (a) consultation option 4, promoting the development of accommodation types to reduce demand for conversion of existing housing to HMOs will be taken forward, allowing time to assess housing accreditation and licensing options;
 - (b) progress will be monitored and assessed in 2017, when the need for policy restrictions on new HMOs in wards and areas with high HMO concentrations through an Article 4 Direction and a threshold (an adaption of consultation option 2(a)) will be considered;
- (2) ask the head of planning services to provide an interim report on the progress of 1 (a) and (b) above to the panel in March 2016.

CHAIR