



Climate and environment emergency executive panel

09:30 to 11:45

18 December 2019

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

Environmental Strategy

The chair reported that the public consultation had been delayed because of the general election and would commence on 19 December 2020.

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes subject to item 5, Environmental Strategy 2019 to 2024, fourth paragraph, third bullet point, second sentence, correct the reference to the value of the pay-as-you go “Beryl” bike scheme to £700,000.

3. Carbon Footprint Report 2018-19

(The chair agreed to move this item up the agenda so that Claire Tullett, environmental strategy officer, could present the report.)

The environmental strategy officer presented the report. She also referred to the supplementary report that had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting and comprised a revised version of Graph 3.0 that corrected the 16-17 data and showed a smoother downward projection. She explained that the purpose of the report was to consider the council’s performance at reducing its carbon footprint. The council was obliged to collate data under NI 185, a performance indicator which measured the CO₂ reductions arising from the council’s operations. The council would be reviewing its carbon emissions targets as part of the next phase of the Carbon Management Plan and in line with the revised Environmental Strategy.

During discussion the environmental strategy officer, together with the environmental strategy manager and the director of place, referred to the report and answered members’ questions.

A member suggested that the council's carbon emissions only related to 2 per cent of the city's emissions, which meant that the majority of emissions in the local area were from the private sector. Discussion ensued in which the panel considered whether the reduction of the council's operations had corresponded with a reduction in its carbon footprint and noting that it would become more difficult. The environmental strategy manager and director of place referred to the changes to waste management collections and said that the revised routes and bi-weekly collections had saved both resources and energy.

Discussion then ensued on the how the council influenced its contractors who provided services on behalf of the council, for instance, how the council could require electric vehicles. The environmental strategy manager explained that the council collated data from its contractors and that contract procurement was refreshed in line with the council's changes to its environmental policy. A member suggested that by bringing joint ventures in-house the council would have greater control over these services and the committee was advised that greater use of electrification would significantly reduce the council's carbon emissions over a two to five year period. The chair said that there were other benefits from switching to electric powered tools and gave the example where an electric powered machine had the additional benefit from its diesel or petrol counterpart, which not only reduced emissions but generated fewer vibrations which created less vibration and meant that operators could work for longer on the machines.

During discussion a member suggested that the report should have been framed around the climate and environment emergency and that it was important to acknowledge this in the report for members of the public. There also should be a comparison with other councils' performances in reducing their carbon emissions and that the council should aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. The chair said that the report demonstrated that the council was achieving its corporate objectives and the outcomes were being met.

The environmental strategy manager responded to a member's question about the use of gas as a form of heating. He said that ground source heating could be an alternative where the building fabric was suitable. There was a possibility of rolling out a green gas tariff in the future but at the moment it was too expensive to consider. In reply to a member's question about carbon emissions on the council's building projects, the environmental strategy officer explained that this related to the demolition of the Mile Cross depot and that resources would need to be deployed from other activities if data was required on other building works.

Discussion then ensued on the impact of council decisions on carbon emissions, particularly in relation to changes to traffic and highways. The vice chair said that individual traffic schemes were made under the Transport for Norwich policies and therefore determination of individual schemes should be considered within the wider context. The environmental strategy manager said that transport emissions were flat and had not increased.¹

In response to a suggestion that the air quality targets should use nitrogen oxide as a proxy for carbon emissions, the head of place said that as a proxy there tended to

¹ The Tyndall Centre disagrees with this statement because figures in Norwich, in line with national phenomena show that emissions are increasing.

be a converse relationship between the two and that whilst it was efficient in carbon terms switching to “dirty fuels” like diesel had led to increases in other emissions. Air quality was being addressed by enforcing buses to switch engines off when idling in the city centre.

Discussion ensued on the council’s vehicle fleet, noting that there was a number of hybrid vehicles and suggesting that the council should have all electric fleet in the future. The environmental strategy manager said that the use of hybrid vehicles bridged the gap until there were sufficient electric charging points available. One of the issues was that St Giles multi-storey car park did not have capacity for more charging points.

In conclusion the chair and vice chair commented on the progress that the council had made to reduce its carbon emissions directly under its control and that it had achieved its 40 per cent target within the set period.

RESOLVED to note the outcomes of the carbon footprint exercise.

4. Tyndall Centre

(Asher Minns, executive director, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, attended the meeting for this item.)

Asher Minns gave a presentation on climate change. During the presentation he said that there were now concerns that the atmosphere was more sensitive to carbon emissions than previously considered and that warming will only cease if emissions were decreased to net zero but sea level would continue to rise. He referred to the global carbon budget and said that whilst CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere had slowed to an increase of 0.6 per cent last year, CO₂ emissions needed to decline rapidly to net-zero around mid-century to pursue the Paris Agreement 1.5°C goal. Renewable energy was growing but as yet had not offset the growth in fossil energy consumption. China, USA, European Union and India were the top four emitters. However, in terms of tonnage per person China was equivalent to the European Union at 7 tonnes, with the USA, at 16.2 tonnes per person. Many countries in Europe and the US have decreased CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels through energy efficiency and demand reduction. Around the top 10 per cent of emitters were responsible for half of all emissions and much of this difference was underpinned by household income. Norwich has a high proportion of the population in the lowest deprivation decile across wards (2019 Social Deprivation Score). The changes that most people could make in their lives were to switch to a plant-based diet; fly less (only 10 to 15 per cent of local population flew regularly); campaign and political engagement for decarbonisation, switch to renewable energy providers and reduce heating/cooling demands. Annually in Norwich, there needed to be a 13 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions to achieve net-zero by mid-century.

The environmental strategy manager gave a presentation on achieving “Net Zero” by 2050 and the use of the SCATTER, carbon footprint and reduction tool, as it relates to Norwich. He explained that the tool was in development and that elements would be available next year. The city’s emissions amounted to 0.2 per cent of the UK’s total, and the council was working together with its partners at a local and sub-regional level to meet a 13 per cent year on year reduction in emissions which would be difficult to achieve.

(Copies of the presentations are available on the council's website with the committee documents for the meeting.)

During discussion, Asher Minns and officers answered members' questions. In reply to the chair, Asher Minns explained what the two main things that people as individuals could do to reduce their carbon emissions. The consumption of meat in developed countries was one of the largest lifestyle contributors to carbon emissions. Everyone had to eat and adopting a plant based diet could make a major change in emissions. Similarly people could choose not to fly and reduce their car use. There was a link to wealth and people on low incomes did not consume so much meat or fly.

A member suggested that given the climate and environment emergency it would be better to front load the 13 per cent annual reduction. Asher Minns agreed that the targets could be achieved more quickly with front loading but said that, looking at the carbon budget for 2010-20, most easy wins had been made already and that to achieve the year on year target it would become more difficult but could be achieved with the right policies in place.

Discussion ensued on ways the role of leadership to influence individuals' behaviour. Technological solutions and changes to infrastructure would ensure that housing and transport was more energy efficient but would require changes in behaviour. It was recognised that there was awareness of the impact of climate change in the population, particularly as demonstrated by young people, and that national policies lagged behind. Local authority councillors could use their position to lobby government to introduce the necessary legislation and work with their neighbouring councils to reduce carbon emissions and increase its sphere of influence.

A member referred to older people and the list of priorities that individuals could take and said that older people required more heating to keep warm and required car journeys to take them to hospital etc. Asher Minns said that the demographic of Norwich was a young city and that it was better to target the "biggest wins" and suggested that interventions should be made not at older people but targeting the general population where choices of heating or transport could make a difference.

During discussion a member referred to the impact of climate warming on sea levels and how heavily built up areas of Norfolk would be below the sea. She asked what actions plans were in place for addressing this and whether action plans to reduce carbon emissions could be shared between local authorities. Asher Minns said that the Tyndall Centre in consultation with local authorities were co-producing a tool-kit for local authorities. In relation to sea level changes, he said that increases in sea-level was happening and would continue for millennia and the role of local authorities would be to discuss necessary resilience with their citizens. Adaptation to sea level and other environmental changes needed to be addressed and decisions made as to where sea defences would be continued. Conversely some of the environmental changes would not be disadvantageous. An increase of wetlands would increase natural habitats and biodiversity. However with the concerns about flooded homes it could not be left to the next generation to take action. In summary, Asher Minns said that he congratulated members on their ambition and that he considered the city council ahead of some other local authorities in terms of collaboration and co-operation.

RESOLVED to thank Asher Minns and the environmental strategy manager for their presentations.

5. Date of next meeting

RESOLVED to hold the next meeting on 12 February at 9:30 in the Westwick room.

CHAIR