

Sustainable development panel**09:30 to 11:30****25 November 2015**

Present: Councillors Bremner (chair), Herries (vice chair), Bogelein, Grahame, Jackson, Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Thomas (Va) and Woollard

Apologies: Councillors Lubbock (other council business) and Thomas (Va)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015.

3. Joint Core Strategy Annual monitoring report

The planning team leader (policy) presented the report and a supplementary report comprising a summary of the findings of the monitoring report.

The planning team leader, together with the head of planning services and the planner (policy) answered members' questions. This included confirmation that the Joint core strategy (JCS) took account of changing demographics as the proportion of older people in the population was projected to increase over the next 20 years. The detail was set out in the Greater Norwich strategic housing needs assessment. Referring to the county council's Joint strategic needs assessment, the planning team leader said that there was a move to increase support to older people in their own homes. This put pressure on housing availability but reduced the need for increasing the provision of specific residential accommodation with care facilities.

Discussion ensued on the need to provide appropriate, affordable housing to meet the demographic profile and the government's proposals under the Housing and Planning Bill 2015-2016.

The panel noted that the definition of a lower super output area related to the reporting of statistics, such as census returns and other information, for a geographic area of around 1,500 people. It was previously known as an enumeration district.

In reply to a question, the head of planning services explained that some of the information used to monitor the performance of the JCS was no longer collected

nationally or locally and that this would be reflected in next year's monitoring report. Members of the panel were invited to email questions on specific aspects of the monitoring report to the head of planning services who would arrange for the questions to be collated and circulated to members. A member sought an explanation for the 2013-14 statistics for Norwich and Broadland (on page 79 of the monitoring report) which showed a significant increase in the number of total dwellings with category 1 hazards.

The head of planning explained that conservation area appraisals had slipped due to staffing resources either being directed to development control, as the market had picked up or due to staff turnover. The next conservation area to be appraised would be Hellesdon.

The panel discussed the implications of permitted development rights which enabled office spaces to be converted to residential accommodation without the need for planning permission and resulted in there being no scope for the local planning authority to seek affordable housing or ensure that the residential units met minimum space standards. A member referred to the vacant office space and asked whether there was a demand for new office space. The panel was advised that it tended to be older office blocks that were being converted to residential accommodation. The high cost of development meant that new office blocks were usually purpose built for a particular firm; there was good demand for newer, higher quality office buildings, which meant that these were unlikely to be converted to residential. There was also demand from firms in the creative industries looking for office spaces in quirky, older buildings. The offices that had been repurposed for residential use were usually offices that had been built in the fifties or sixties and had been vacant for some time and difficult to modernise.

In reply to a question on the Northern City Centre Area Action plan the head of planning services explained that the new owners of Anglia Square were in discussion with the council about the process to follow in securing its regeneration. The existing planning consent for a mixed development including 318 units of housing, of which 33% was to be affordable housing, had been contingent on a large supermarket store being secured as the anchor for the site and therefore was not viable without it.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the publication and content of the 2014-2015 Joint Core Strategy Annual monitoring report;
- (2) ask members to submit detailed questions to the head of planning services and note that the questions and answers will be collated and circulated to members of the panel.

4. Retail Monitor 2015

The planner (policy) presented the report.

During discussion the planning team leader (policy), together with the head of planning and the planners (policy) answered members' questions. The panel noted that the development of the city centre strategy was in its early stages and that the

council would be working closely with the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) and the Norwich Society, which was in the process of developing its own city centre strategy.

The chair welcomed the report which demonstrated that the city had continued to thrive as a regional retail centre.

RESOLVED to note the findings of the 2015 Retail Monitor.

5. Environmental statement

The environmental strategy manager presented the report. He pointed out that paragraph 1 should have been amended to replace the "XXXX 2014" with "27 February 2013", the date of the meeting where the panel considered the Climate Local commitments (approved at cabinet at its meeting on 20 March 2013). It was also noted that the reference to the pink pedalway in paragraph 4 c) ii) of the Environment statement should be corrected by deleting "pink" and replacing it with "blue".

During discussion the environmental strategy manager referred to the report and answered members' questions. The panel noted that the Christmas street lights in the city had been replaced with LED lights and that the floodlights at City Hall would be replaced with LED lights after Christmas.

In reply to a question, the environmental strategy manager said that the government's reduction in the feed-in tariff meant that the large scale roll out of photovoltaic solar panels across the council housing stock would not be viable. This could be considered in the future as the cost of installation would be reduced as technology advanced.

Discussion ensued on the successful delivery of Cosy City and the reliance on external funding to operate this scheme. The city council had been the only authority to ensure that all its funding had been allocated to help people in fuel poverty. It was noted that initiatives such as Switch and Save reduced fuel costs to people in fuel poverty without an initial outlay. A report on Cosy City had been deferred to the next meeting of the panel so that the outcome of the government's autumn statement and proposals for the Green Deal had been announced.

Members noted that the council's procurement strategy ensured that its contractors complied with the council's environmental policy and contributed to its reduction in carbon dioxide. Contractors were required to provide an annual report.

The environmental strategy manager referred to the council's fleet review and said that it was evident that there could be some efficiency savings and that it could be used effectively. The council had removed the diesel Vauxwagon polos from its fleet in 2008 before the recent concern about the misrepresentation of emissions from these vehicles.

During discussion a member suggested that at events for the recycling and collection of electrical goods, there should be publicity about the facilities at the permanent site at Swanton Road, Mile Cross. General discussion ensued about the scope to

promote recycling and reduce landfill. It was considered that there was around 20% of recyclable food waste still in the general refuse.

During discussion on the built environment and planning; and the natural environment sections of the statement, the environmental strategy manager and the planning policy team leader (policy) answered members' questions. The panel discussed the importance of bio-diversity and how air quality would be modelled as part of a planning application.

The chair said that he was very pleased that the city council and its officers had in contributing to the council's carbon reduction targets and the progress that had been made.

A member suggested that appendix B the table that set out the actions against the environmental statement would be more informative to the reader if dates were added. The environmental strategy manager said that this could be considered when the environmental statement was reviewed and explained that the team had been under pressure as the environmental statement, Climate Change Local and HECA reports had all been due at the same time.

The chair said that the scrutiny committee would be considering the environmental statement at its meeting in January 2016.

RESOLVED to note the environmental statement and progress on the actions that has been made.

6. Photo-voltaic (PV) panel array on the roof of City Hall

The environmental strategy manager presented the report.

Members of the panel commented that it was regrettable that some of the panels had not been operational during the summer months due to the roof repairs.

The panel agreed that in future information on the progress of the PV panels could be disseminated to members by email or published on e-councillor.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report;
- (2) ask the environmental strategy manager to monitor the usage of the PV panel array on the roof of City Hall and to circulate information to councillors periodically.

CHAIR