



**Climate and environment emergency executive panel**

**16:30 to 18:30**

**22 March 2022**

Present: Councillors Stonard (vice chair, in the chair), Carlo, Champion (substitute for Councillor Osborn), Giles (substitute for Councillor Thomas (Va)), Lubbock, Oliver and Stutely (substitute for Councillor Hampton)

Also present: Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing

Apologies: Councillors Hampton (chair), Thomas (Va) and Osborn

**1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021.

**3. Environmental Strategy Team Update**

Phil Hunt, the environmental strategy manager gave a presentation to update members to provide an overview of the scope of the activities of the team and the current staffing and recruitment in place to complete the team. (A copy of the presentation was included in the agenda papers for the meeting.) During the presentation, the environmental strategy manager expressed his gratitude to Rachel Sowerby, affordable warmth officer, and his predecessor, Richard Willson for their help with the handover. He also introduced Martin Symons, who would be the carbon management programme coordinator from 4 April 2022. There was funding for a further two more posts from April and the details were still to be agreed.

During discussion, the environmental strategy manager and the head of strategy, engagement and culture answered members' questions. Members were interested in the mapping exercise across the council to ensure that policies and strategies were applied throughout all areas of the organisation and maximised the impact of its environmental policies by working with other councils and partner organisations. It was noted that the 2040 City Vision Business Leaders' group and Norwich Climate Change Commission were focussed on supporting businesses to decarbonise and, although supported by the council, were independent of it.

Members were advised that in relation to the vacant posts, existing job descriptions had been reviewed to prioritise the resources to the budget available.

In reply to a question, the environmental strategy manager commented that the Retrofit Strategy was more closely linked to the Heat Strategy than the Affordable Warmth Strategy (although there were co-benefits for residents). The Heat Strategy described how heating would be provided in the city as it transferred away from reliance on gas.

**RESOLVED** to thank the officers for the report and to welcomed Phil Hunt and Martin Symons, to the council.

#### **4. Report of Progress on the Installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at City Hall**

Martin Symons presented the report as he had managed this project in his current employment. The next stage would be the delivery of the steel frame for the air source heat pump (ASHP) by crane on 28 March 2022. The ASHP would be installed in April. 2022. New efficient gas boilers had been installed which would provide 108 per cent efficiency. The ASHP would deliver 43 per cent of the heating and hot water for City Hall, providing a carbon saving of 104 tonnes. The project should be completed by the end of May.

During discussion, Martin Symons and the environmental strategy manager answered members' questions.

Members commented on the efficiency of the gas boiler exceeding 100 per cent and were advised that the European methodology for calculating efficiency is used by manufacturers which counts energy recovered from flue gas condensate as additional to the maximum efficiency without counting the condensate. In practice this means the boilers installed are condensing boilers and the most efficient available.

Discussion ensued on this project being an exemplar of renewable energy on a listed building and that it would benefit the wider community by sharing information. A member said that cost and lack of knowledge of ASHP were barriers to installation. Members of the community would be curious to see it and encourage the use of ASHPs on other large buildings and in households. Members commented that there should be opportunities for local people to learn skills and noted that the installation was from a firm in Suffolk. The council could share the knowledge of the ASHP by providing visits from interested parties once it was installed and working. Members also noted that this scheme complemented the photo-voltaic panels on the City Hall.

Members noted that the council had received a grant of c£625k for the installation and that decarbonisation rather than savings had been the focus for this project. The environmental strategy manager confirmed that there would be communications about the project, such as around the road closures for the crane. However, the increasing cost of gas and changes to building regulations in relation to prevent the fitting of gas boilers into new domestic properties from 2025, would promote the use of ASHPs as a source of heating. Members were advised that on mild days City Hall's heating needs could be met by the ASHP, but when it was colder 57 per cent of the heat would be delivered by the new gas boilers.

The panel noted that there was a national shortage of installers of ASHP and were advised that as part of the strategy development work in the county it was recognised that there was a need to address this through the Green Economy. The council would address this by working in partnership with the technical colleges and, as part of the Retrofit Strategy, identify opportunities for upskilling contractors.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **5. Report of Recent Community Engagement Activities Relating to Biodiversity**

Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing, introduced the report and said there had been a significant amount of work undertaken by the community enabling team to engage the community in the development of the biodiversity strategy.

The environmental strategy manager presented the report, and together with the head of strategy, engagement and culture, answered members' questions.

During discussion, members considered how they or residents in the wards they represented could become "Citizen Scientists" or comment on the emerging strategy. Members were advised that the ["Big Biodiversity Conversation"](#) was still open for comments which were being collated and analysed by volunteers at the University of East Anglia. "Citizen Scientists" could be engaged through voluntary organisations that supported cemeteries and parks and the community engagement team. Members were advised that interested residents could sign up on the [website](#).

The panel commented on the observed outcomes set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

Members pointed out that the city council was opposed to the Northern Distributor Road (NDR) Western Link because of its danger to biodiversity. A member commented that it was not clear whether the "negativity to the council" was aimed at the city council, the county council or the adjoining district councils, but noted that the invitations to the event had been to communities within the city council boundaries.

The panel commented that the link to food poverty/sustainability had been discussed. The environmental strategy manager explained that this discussion had been about the rising cost in gas and mobilising the community in the purchase of materials to insulate their homes. Members noted that the community and neighbourhood engagement team's work around food poverty, included work around inequality, disadvantage and cost of living crisis.

Members were advised that the council would seek to work with independent subject matter experts as required, but there was not sufficient work for a dedicated post. Members considered the requirement for biodiversity net gain through planning applications and were advised that applicants provided an independent ecology/biodiversity survey which was assessed by the planning officers.

Councillor Packer addressed the panel on the importance for all ward councillors to encourage residents to engage and respect the council's policies to protect biodiversity and green infrastructure and expressed his regret that trees adjacent to a community centre had been cut down.

A member said that he was looking forward to seeing the biodiversity strategy in June 2022 and how it would fit in with the waste strategy.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the report:
- (2) that members and residents can engage in the biodiversity activities by signing up on the [website](#) or contacting the [community@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:community@norwich.gov.uk)

## **6. Update on Climate Risks to Norwich City Council**

The affordable warmth officer presented the report and explained that there was a greater awareness of risks to service areas from climate change.

During discussion members shared their views on the risk assessment of climate change and mitigation. A member commented on the impact of climate change on the county and concern that one of these impacts would be inward migration as people were forced to relocate from coastal areas.

The head of strategy, engagement and culture and the environmental strategy manager reminded the panel that this work was specific to the council and its services. The identification of risks associated with climate change and the mitigation was ongoing. It should be considered in the context of the council's wider influence on climate change through the City Vision and its other partnerships and would keep an eye on good academic information to build into the council's risk analysis. Members expressed an interest in knowing the source of the baseline information for this purpose.

A member commented that the risk register needed to include mitigation for councillors as community leaders to deal with events directly arising from climate change, such as flash flooding and heat waves, and mitigation such as upskilling members to coordinate the community response. The head of strategy, engagement and culture said this would be relate to emergency situations and that she would report back to a future meeting on the assessment and risk mitigation, including councillor training.

**RESOLVED** to note the work that was being done to identify climate risk to Norwich City Council.

## **7. Update on Funding Bids**

(Councillor Lubbock left the meeting during this item.)

The affordable warmth officer presented the report.

During discussion, the affordable warmth officer, together with the environmental strategy manager and the head of strategy, engagement and culture answered members' questions.

Members commented on the pilot project to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points in the city and discussed the practicality of providing chargers in densely populated parts of the city. Members considered that access to the chargers would be important and that residents would need to communicate with each other through social messaging about availability. The problem would be ensuring that cars were not parked in the bays so that residents wanting to use the chargers could access them. There was some experience of this with the bays reserved for car club vehicles. Discussion ensued on the need for infrastructure for electric charging points to affect the transition to electric vehicles, which included standards to ensure that cables across pavements were protected to ensure access, and payment arrangements. The panel also considered other constraints to the transition to electric vehicle use such as capacity on the national grid and the practicalities of flat dwellers accessing chargers.

In reply to a member's question, the affordable warmth officer confirmed that in relation to the Sustainable Warmth Competition, the survey work was separate to the capped sum of £10k for owner occupiers and £5k for rented properties. She would provide information to ward councillors on the take up of the in Nelson, Sewell and Wensum wards. The private sector housing team would be targeting landlords.

Members were advised that there would be further information on The HNZ (Heat Network Zone) Pilot Programme in June 2022. The environmental strategy manager said that the benefits of this modelling could lead to improvements in affordable warmth and reduced carbon emissions in the city.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the progress on these funding bids;
- (2) ask the affordable warmth officer to circulate ward information data on the Sustainable Warmth Competition to members of the panel.

CHAIR