

Agenda Item: 4

COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of South Norfolk District Council, held on Monday 11 October 2021 at 7.30pm.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: Ellis (Chairman), Amis, Bills, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Curson, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Edney, Elliott, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Hardy, Holden, Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, Rowe, J Savage, R Savage, Thomas and Worley
Apologies	Councillors: Bendle, Bernard, Clifford-Jackson, Curson, Elmer, Halls, Hornby, Legg, Spruce, Thomson, J Wilby, M Wilby
Officers in Attendance:	The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (E Hodds) and the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham)

3602 MINUTES

Referring to the minutes of the last meeting, Cllr J Overton advised Council that he had been listed as “in attendance” in error. Cllr Overton had sent apologies to this meeting.

Subject to this minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3603 CHAIRMAN’S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the period 27 July – 11 October 2021.

The Chairman informed Council that unfortunately she had been unable to attend the reception hosted by the High Sheriff of Norfolk, held at Cromer Pier on 6 September. Members noted that the Leader of the Council had represented the Council at this engagement.

3604 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

a) Motion to Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

Cllr C Brown moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr D Burrill:

“This Council acknowledges that:

- 1. Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world. Global temperatures have increased by around 1°C from pre-industrial levels and the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals currently threatened with extinction.**
- 2. Unless we drastically change course, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement’s safe 1.5°C limit. Pledges like the Paris Agreement and updated emissions targets are not legally binding. The gap between pledges and policies leaves the world on course for catastrophic warming of near 3%. As the 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear, every half a degree makes a world of difference: severe climate impacts with 1.5°C of warming, such as extreme weather patterns causing flooding and heat waves, get significantly worse with 2°C. According to the IPCC, limiting heating to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities.**
- 3. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction and more than 40% are in decline. We have lost 95% of our hedgehogs. The UK needs a legally-enforceable nature target so that by 2030 nature is visibly and measurably on the path of recovery, in line with the Global Goal for Nature and the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature.**

This Council notes that:

- 1. Many local authorities are playing an important role in the UK taking action to achieve net zero carbon emissions, and to protect and revitalise local wildlife and natural habitats.**
- 2. Parliament in May 2019 declared an Environment and Climate Emergency.**
- 3. There is a Bill before Parliament—the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (published as the “Climate and Ecology Bill”), which, if it became law, would require the government to develop a strategy to address the emergency that would ensure:**

- the ecological emergency is tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis in a joined-up approach;
- the Paris Agreement is enshrined into law to ensure that UK does its real fair share to limit global temperature rise to the most stringent end of the Paris agreement – 1.5°C.
- the Leaders Pledge for Nature is enshrined into law to ensure that the UK's ecosystems are protected and restored with a focus on biodiversity, soils and natural carbon sinks;
- the UK takes full responsibility for our entire greenhouse gas footprint (i.e. consumption emissions plus shipping, flights and land-based transport) by accounting for all of the emissions that take place overseas to manufacture, transport and dispose of the goods and services we import and consume;
- the UK takes full responsibility for our ecological footprint so that we protect health and resilience of ecosystems along both domestic and our global supply chains;
- an independent, temporary Climate and Nature Assembly is set-up, representative of the UK's population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the emergency strategy.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1. Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill;**
- 2. Inform the local media of this decision;**
- 3. Write an open letter to Richard Bacon MP and George Freeman MP, shared with our residents through local and social media, urging them to sign up to support the Bill."**

Cllr Brown urged members to vote in support of his motion. He drew attention to the warnings of the ecological devastation facing the planet, and the huge impact humans were having on the biodiversity of the world. He referred to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), and also the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), which he felt to be just as important. He stressed that this was a key time to be raising this issue and demonstrating support for the protection of ecology and enhancement of biodiversity, on natural habitats.

Cllr Brown referred to Sir David Attenborough's recent book "A Life on our Planet", in which he described the changes to the planet he had witnessed during his lifetime. The book advised that in 1937, it was estimated that only 66% of the planet's original wilderness existed, and this had now reduced to an estimated 35%. Sir David had predicted that should this continue at the same rate, by the 2080s, global food production would be at crisis point, harvests would fail, and with the loss of insects and pollinators, three quarters of food crops would be affected. Within the lifetime of someone born today, humans would have brought about the complete collapse of the living world

and civilisation as we know it. Cllr Brown stressed that he did not wish to be alarmist, but this was where the evidence was pointing. He added that fortunately this could be avoided if everyone worked together now, to make the necessary changes.

Referring to the Climate and Emergency Bill in parliament, he advised that this had been supported by 118 MPs and was due for its second reading on 29 October. The Bill would ensure that the ecological emergency would be tackled alongside climate change, with a joined-up approach to ensure a more sustainable future. He urged members to show publicly their support for the Bill and to encourage local MPs to support it in parliament. He advised that many other councils, including Norwich, had already demonstrated their support.

Cllr J Fuller explained that no one was as keen on the environment as he was, and he referred to his interest in food and food security and his own fertiliser business.

He agreed that everyone needed to contribute in protecting the environment but he stressed the importance of the Council demonstrating its support for a Bill that stood a good chance of being passed. He had originally thought that the Bill referred to in the motion was the Environment Bill, introduced by the Conservatives and was currently going through parliament. However, this was a separate Bill which he felt failed to address a number of issues, including cleaner air, purer water, sustainable energy, the reduction of waste, and the setting of environmental standards, all included in the Government's Environmental Bill. He suggested that the Government's Bill was far wider and more encompassing of both the natural and built environment.

Referring to the motion, he felt it to be far too long, stating that much of it was a series of statements which was very difficult to amend without simply negating it. He suggested that the motion be referred to the Economy and Environment Policy Committee to revise and produce a more concise version, which was not a series of long statements. This would then return for debate at the full Council meeting in December. He also suggested that the Monitoring Officer revised standing orders to provide more guidance for members on the structure of motions, which in turn would lead to more efficient debate.

Cllr S Ridley seconded this proposal.

Cllr Brown felt his motion to be simple and straight forward, regarding an issue that required urgent attention, and he was disappointed at the Leader's proposal. He acknowledged that the Economy and Environment Policy Committee would have more time to debate the points made and he hoped that should the amendment be carried, that the Committee would bring

forward a motion, which still contained the main core elements of his original motion.

With 26 votes for and 6 against, it was then

RESOLVED

That the motion be referred to the Economy and Environment Policy Committee, for revision, to return to Council on 6 December for consideration.

b) Declaring a Climate Emergency

Cllr C Brown moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr D Burrill

“This Council notes:

- 1. Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO2 levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity;**
- 2. In order to reduce the chance of runaway Global Warming and limit the effects of Climate Breakdown, it is imperative that we reduce our CO2eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible;**
- 3. Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, infrastructure, etc., to make low carbon living easier and the new norm. And these carbon emissions result from both production and consumption;**
- 4. The upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in October/November, which will aim to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, and the UK’s commitment to working to inspire climate action ahead of COP26;**
- 5. Unfortunately, our current plans and actions are not enough. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C limit before 2050;**
- 6. The consequences of inaction to address this emergency will include:**
 - Increased risk of flooding, subsidence, and damage to buildings and infrastructure.**
 - Health effects, risk of disease and severe risks from extreme weather events.**
 - Higher energy and food costs and impact on food production.**
 - Increases in social injustice and inequality.**

- 7. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in October 2018, describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise, and told us that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities;**
- 8. 74% of District, County, Unitary & Metropolitan Councils in the UK have now declared a 'Climate Emergency', including our neighbours Breckland, Norwich, Mid-Suffolk and East Suffolk;**
- 9. Our responsibility to help secure an environmentally sustainable future for our residents and in relation to the global effects of climate change.**

This Council believes that:

- 1. Climate change and sustainability are amongst the biggest issues of the 21st century and the effects of man-made and dangerous climate change are already manifestly occurring;**
- 2. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) detail that we are already seeing the consequences of a 1°C of global warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice, among other worrying changes;**
- 3. We have a critical role to play in delivering a zero carbon future;**
- 4. In light of the IPCC's special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in October 2018, which confirmed the catastrophic consequences of man-made climate change, the Council is determined to achieve further reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases related to the district and is willing to take additional concrete steps to achieve this.**

Therefore, the Council agrees to:

- 1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency';**
- 2. Together as a community and with wider stakeholders, collectively work towards making South Norfolk carbon neutral by 2032, delivering impact on both production and consumption emissions;**
- 3. Prepare a Climate Change Strategy, to complement our Environmental Strategy, in line with this pledge, and, with our partners across the community, to develop an action plan and 'route map' to a sustainable, low carbon future for our community;**
- 4. Call on Westminster Government to provide the powers and resources to make the 2032 target possible;**
- 5. Work with other governments and Councils to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;**

- 6. Work with partners across the district and beyond to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans;**
- 7. Launch engagement with the public to:**
 - Improve “carbon literacy” of all citizens;**
 - Encourage and support leadership on this issue in all sectors of society;**
 - Obtain meaningful public input into the South Norfolk Climate Change Strategy;**
 - Facilitate wide community engagement and behavioural change;**
- 8. Report back to Full Council annually on:**
 - progress towards becoming carbon-neutral by 2032**
 - steps taken to support reduction in CO2e emissions in the district;**
- 9. Ensure all energy supplied to council buildings is sourced via 100% renewable energy providers by 2023, with the exception of buildings where energy is generated onsite.**

In presenting his motion, Cllr Brown suggested that the Council had been silent for far too long on the biggest issue facing the world, that of human induced climate change. He felt that in failing to declare a climate emergency, the Council had sent a powerful message to its residents – that it was simply not important.

Cllr Brown stressed that it was important and that everyone had a part to play in addressing the issues. He acknowledged that the motion was long, but this was a key issue and he wanted to ensure that everyone agreed with the facts and scientific evidence behind it.

He advised members that three quarters of all local authorities had already declared a climate emergency and were proactively acting on this, with most setting net zero carbon targets for 2030.

Cllr Brown advised that he worked with a wide range of businesses from all sectors and he had noted that they all clearly understood the importance of this issue and were taking action, declaring their own net zero carbon targets and transitioning their businesses ready for the new world. They recognised the situation for what it was – an emergency that threatened everyone and required immediate action.

He drew attention to Bedford Borough Council that had declared a climate emergency back in 2019, and had recently reported reduced carbon emissions of 15% over the last 2 years. It had set up a Climate Change Committee and had clearly set out a strategy for reduction, taking action and monitoring and reporting on its performance. It had set up a climate change

fund to assist community buildings with their own strategies to reduce emissions.

In comparison, Cllr Brown referred to South Norfolk Council's actions as disappointing. He felt that the Council's Environmental Strategy lacked ambition and clear targets, explaining that the only mention of climate change referred to how to mitigate the impacts of it.

Summing up, Cllr Brown stressed the need for the Council to follow the example of other businesses and organisations, to go further, act faster and do more. It needed to take responsibility and to take immediate action, setting an example to its residents

Cllr Brown urged members to debate and support the motion.

In response, Cllr Fuller stated that the Council did have a very ambitious Environmental Strategy, that examined both the work of the Council, and how it could use its leadership powers to encourage others to take responsibility and reduce energy use. He made reference to the work of Building Control and Housing Standards, which promoted safe environments and energy efficiency. He explained that South Norfolk was one of the first councils to introduce electric car charging points in its car parks, and he made reference to the Council's open spaces, which were instrumental in creating a healthy environment for all. He stressed that a healthy, safe, neat and tidy environment was important to everyone.

Cllr Fuller stressed that the Council was preparing positively for the future and suggested that simply turning the thermostat down would not help future generations have access to good jobs, within a healthy economy, and allow for the advancement of science. Only last week, he had celebrated with Lotus, plans for a new electric car, which in turn would double the number of people working at its site in Hethel. He felt that the Council should demonstrate its leadership through its actions, not just through words, and he was yet to be convinced that declaring a climate emergency was the way forward.

Turning to the motion, he explained it to be far too long to dissect in detail, and to debate fully within the time constraints of the evening. He acknowledged that it did make some good points and was a very serious issue. However, he felt it necessary to propose that it be referred to the Economy and Environment Policy Committee, to revise and produce a more concise version, which was not a series of long statements, that would return for a more focussed debate at the full Council meeting in December.

Cllr S Ridley seconded this proposal.

In response, Cllr Brown expressed his disappointment, explaining that it sent a poor message to residents, that climate change and the environment was not a priority. He acknowledged that the motion was long but half of it simply set out the facts. He could not understand why anyone would not want to support the motion.

With 23 votes for and 7 against, it was then

RESOLVED

That the motion be referred to the Economy and Environment Policy Committee, for revision, to return to Council on 6 December for consideration.

3605 ADOPTION OF LONG STRATTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr J Fuller presented the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which sought the approval of the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Fuller congratulated all those involved in the production of the Plan and was pleased that residents had voted, with a clear majority, in favour of its implementation. He referred to its content as aspirational and to be admired.

Local member, Cllr A Thomas, thanked all those on the Neighbourhood Plan Team, and officers from the Council, for the huge amount of work undertaken to ensure that the Plan was acceptable to both the Examiner and residents. She was disappointed that not more residents had been engaged in the process, but this was no reflection on the amount of hard work carried out by all. She felt the adoption of the Plan to be very timely, referring to resubmission of the Long Stratton bypass and housing planning applications, explaining that the Plan examined what the centre of the town could look like, once the A140 ceased to run through its heart.

Cllr J Worley, also local member for Long Stratton, echoed Cllr Thomas' words, explaining that he was very grateful for all the hard work of the volunteers, town councillors and officers from the Council, who had been involved.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED

To adopt the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan.

3606 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Cllr J Fuller presented the report of the Monitoring Officer.

He hoped that members would support the proposal to grant Cllr Wilby a temporary dispensation from attending meetings of the Council, to be regularly reviewed, as she was currently not in the best of health.

Referring to the proposal to increase the membership of the Development Management Committee, he advised that Cllrs B Duffin, F Ellis and T Holden, would be appointed to the Committee.

Cllr Brown was delighted that the Development Management Committee was to return to a membership of nine, explaining that he felt a larger committee provided a wider range of views, skills and experience. He advised that he would inform Democratic Services of the additional Liberal Democrat appointment in due course.

Turning to the update on hybrid meetings, Cllr Brown was pleased to hear that this option continued to be explored.

It was

RESOLVED TO

1. Agree to a dispensation for Cllr J Wilby from attending meetings of the Council, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, until further notice, and that the situation be reviewed at regular intervals by the Leader and the Monitoring Officer.
2. Agree to increase the membership of the Development Management Committee to nine members, with effect from November 2021.
3. Agree the allocation and appointment of the extra seats to the Development Management Committee.
4. Note the current position with regard to the introduction of hybrid meetings

3607 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

Cllr C Brown asked whether Cabinet could provide an update regarding the provision of accommodation for Afghan refugees in the District.

Cllr A Thomas explained that the Council had identified a number of properties that would be suitable for this purpose; three from the housing register and five that had come forward from private landlords.

The Council was still open to further offers of help or support from private landlords, however members noted that the more rural properties were not ideal as these tended to be isolated and not within easy access of support services. Properties were therefore being sought in the Norwich fringe area. Cllr Thomas was proud that the Council had been able to offer assistance, explaining that elsewhere there had been some resistance from communities, and that not all Councils had provided accommodation.

Cllr G Minshull, ward member for Diss, explained that with budgets being so tight due to the impact of Covid, many shops in the town were struggling to find the funds to keep their shop frontages tidy. He asked Cllr Neal whether there was any additional financial support for these businesses.

Cllr Neal explained that a "Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme" had just been launched, which could assist shops and hospitality businesses with a £2,000 contribution towards the cost of improving shop frontages. This was to be distributed on a "first come, first served" basis and was limited to 100 grant awards. She urged members to encourage local businesses to apply.

(b) Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr G Minshull, advised Council that the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance was continuing to meet, and that all Norfolk authorities had authorised an overall Strategy, designed to enable county wide responses to flooding across all the agencies involved. Members noted that an exercise involving all the authorities, emergency services, and other relevant bodies was planned to take place the following week, which would test the readiness for flooding and identify any weaknesses to be addressed. Council was also informed that the next edition of the Link magazine, would feature an article on what to do and who to contact in the event of a flood.

Cllr Brown thanked Cllr Minshull for the update, and explained that he would pass that information on to residents in his ward, some of whom still had lots of concerns following the flooding last year.

(c) Licensing Appeals and Complaints Committee / Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

In the absence of the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Cllr Y Bendle, the committee clerk read out a brief update on the work of the Licensing Committees.

Members noted that the Committees had recently considered pre-consultations for both a new Gambling Policy and a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy. The public consultations had since been launched and would close on 1 November. Representations would then be considered and following any necessary amendments, would be presented to Council for adoption.

(d) Development Management Committee

There were no questions relating to the work of the Development Management Committee.

(e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

The Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Committee, Cllr K Kiddie explained that there had been no meetings of the Committee since August 2021

3601 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr J Knight, the Council's representative on the Broad's Authority, referred to the recent reports in the press regarding the Authority's behaviour with regard to the prevention of a number of call-ins of a planning application in his ward.

Cllr Knight expressed his disappointment at the Broad Authority's response to the allegations and its failure to address the issues. He advised members that a number of Norfolk MPs had expressed concerns at the situation and were pressing for a review of the management of the Broads Authority. Cllr Knights hoped that members would support efforts to achieve lasting and meaningful change at the Authority.

Cllr J Savage, the Council's representative on the Rural Services Network (RSN), explained that the organisation's objective was to promote fairness for rural communities. Members noted that funding available for urban communities was far more per head of population, than that for rural areas.

Cllr Savage referred to a number of grant aid bodies which might be of interest to members and local residents, relating to whole range of areas, such as electric car charging points and climate change. He explained that he had arranged for Democratic Services to email out a list of these organisations, to all members, after the meeting. He also advised that the RSN provided a number of seminars, which some members might find of interest, on a number of issues, affecting all residents in rural areas.

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm

Chairman