Agenda Item: 4

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk District Council, held on Friday 2 September 2022 at 2pm.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: J Knight (Chairman), Y Bendle, C Brown and R Savage
Apologies:	Councillors: G Francis, K Hurn and J Overton
Substitutes:	Councillors: D Bills (for K Hurn) and N Legg (for G Francis)
Officers in Attendance:	The Development Manager (T Lincoln), the Environmental Protection Manager (A Grimley), the Senior Environmental Management Officer (A Old), the Flood and Water Management Officer (N Harris) and the Democratic Services Officer (J Hammond)

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G Francis, K Hurn and J Overton

37 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman expressed his sincere sympathies to Cllr G Minshull, whose wife, Gayle, had recently passed away.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr D Bills declared an 'other' interest as he was the Chairman of the CNC Board.

39 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee held on 22 April 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

40 WHAT IS BEING DONE, IN PLANNING TERMS, AND WHAT COULD BE DONE TO MANDATE THE INSTALLATION OF LOWER CARBON AND HIGHER SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES INTO NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The Development Manager presented the report which sought to advise the Committee on planning and building regulation policy background which related to the provision of higher sustainability and efficiency standards on new dwellings, as well as the intended journey to reach a new Future Homes Standard and be zero carbon ready.

Members were advised that through the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) there were planning policies that required energy efficient design and provision of renewable energy in new dwellings. The Development Manager added that the Future Homes Standard would introduce a step change to future proof new buildings with low-carbon heating systems and high fabric efficiency, which would be secured through building regulations.

The Future Homes Standard would be delivered in two phases. Phase one saw building regulation changes come into effect on 15 June 2022 and provided an immediate uplift to existing energy efficiency standards. The changes to the building regulations should produce dwellings with 31% less CO_2 compared to dwellings built to current standards. Once the second phase of the Future Homes Standard had been developed and was in effect, all new homes built from 2025 would produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than homes built under the current regulations.

The Committee considered the information provided by the Development Manager and discussed a number of options which could be further investigated and implemented by officers to mandate or encourage the installation of lower carbon and higher sustainability measures into new and existing housing developments. These options included:

<u>Incentivising local infrastructure developments</u>

Members highlighted the importance of improving local infrastructure in conjunction with mandating the inclusion of clean renewable energy sources in new developments. For example, the installation of battery storage alongside solar panels to allow households to store excess generated energy for later use. The Committee queried whether incentives, such as grants, could be offered by the Council to promote local infrastructure developments.

With regard to insulating homes, it was noted that homes which were fully insulated required less heating in colder weather, which lowered the resultant energy requirement of the property. One member recommended that officers researched additional grants or funding streams for the insulation of existing

homes. Officers highlighted the Norfolk Warm Homes Scheme to Members which offered funding towards insulation and heating.

Discussion turned to electric vehicles where one member felt that the Council's planning policy should include the provision of electric vehicle charging points in all housing developments regardless of the number of properties to be built. Concerns were raised by some members as to whether the Grid was strong enough to handle the increased demand from electric vehicle charging as well as the increased amount of electric heating and air source heat pumps (which required electricity input to work). Other members countered that power companies had been investing millions into the network to meet both current and future needs.

Including Listed Buildings in carbon and energy efficiency standards

The Chairman raised concerns that listed buildings were being 'left behind' in terms of carbon reduction measures and increasing energy efficiency standards. He felt that some planning authorities across the country were resistant to approving planning applications which related to altering listed buildings, in particular regarding the fitting of double-glazed windows. The Development Manger advised members that in South Norfolk each planning application was considered on a case-by-case basis according to its merit. In the case of listed buildings, alterations to the property such as the installation of double-glazed windows, which were in keeping with the characteristics and style of the period property, would be considered.

Several members spoke of companies within Norfolk which were producing double and triple glazed windows and other energy efficient features in period styles. They hoped that this would reduce the level of resistance to planning applications regarding listed buildings.

Support for Town and Parish Councils

The Committee strongly felt that reducing carbon emissions and increasing energy efficiency standards needed to be embedded across all areas of development and planning policies, including Neighbourhood Plans. Members suggested that training and support be provided, or offered, to all Town and Parish Councils to incorporate energy efficiency into their respective Neighbourhood Plans.

After further discussion, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To

1. Receive the contents of the report and the step change through the Future Homes Standard (through the Building Regulations) for carbon and energy efficiency standards for new dwellings.

2. Endorse officers to engage in further Future Homes Standards consultations in 2023 which will add further details to the published intended phased approach by Government to achieve the full aims of the Future Homes Standard.

3. Recommend that officers investigate:

    a. Ways in which the Council could incentivise local infrastructure developments such as battery storage, in building developments of over 10 houses.
    b. How Listed Buildings could be included in carbon and energy efficiency standards, particularly in respect of sympathetic alterations to the listed building.
    c. How to support Town and Parish Councils to incorporate energy efficiency into their neighbourhood plans.

41 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER – DOG FOULING

The Environmental Protection Manager introduced the report which presented the proposed new dog fouling and dog restrictions Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014. Members were informed that the proposed PSPO, if approved by Cabinet, would establish a like-for-like replacement of the existing PSPO, and would run for a period of up to three years.

It was highlighted that a formal public consultation had been carried out between 6 May 2022 and 17 June 2022, where Parish and Town Councils, the Police, the Police & Crime Commissioner, Norfolk Highways and the public were all consulted and no objections to the proposed PSPO had been received.

Conversation turned to the number of instances of dog fouling reported and the Environmental Protection Manager explained that relatively low levels of reports were received in South Norfolk. The Council had received seventy in the last twelve months, none of which resulted in a fixed penalty notice being served. However, discussions with residents had shown that dog fouling remained an issue which the public was concerned about. He added that, where a high number of complaints were received, officers could carry out patrols and target regular offenders.

Members noted that the PSPO would allow the Council to place dog waste bins in public areas and queried whether the Council was providing these bins to Town and Parish Councils. The Environmental Protection Manager explained that it was the responsibility of the Town and Parish Councils themselves to provide the bins, using their precept funds. One member further queried whether bagged dog waste could be disposed of in waste bins as

opposed to designated dog bins. The Environmental Protection Manager explained that he would need to check the current legislation but noted that dog waste would be better disposed of in any bin rather than left on the ground.

In response to a question regarding the disposal of bagged dog waste in hedges, the Environmental Protection Manager advised the Committee that whilst these instances would not be covered in the PSPO, incidents would be considered as fly-tipping and subject to relevant enforcement actions.

One member queried what action the Council could take in cases where a serial offender was exempt from the PSPO due to blindness, deafness or a qualifying disability. The Environmental Protection Manager explained that, if referred to the Council, officers would follow up on reported offences, especially if the fouling occurred in play areas. He added that in some instances the Council would look to put mitigations in place.

Concerns were raised over the high number of dog fouling instances in Hingham and, whilst the new PSPO was welcomed, one member queried the impact it would have on the hotspot areas of Hingham, such as the playing fields and graveyard. The Environmental Protection Manager advised members that the PSPO would apply to all public spaces and that dogs would be excluded from enclosed children's play areas. With regard to graveyards, he added the PSPO would apply if the public had the right of access, however the Council had no powers to clear up dog waste on private land. The Environmental Protection Manager stressed the importance of reporting all instances of dog fouling to the Council.

The Committee thanked officers for their proactive work, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet that it approves the Public Space Protection Order No.3 as proposed in paragraph 4.5 and Appendix 1 over the geographical areas identified in Appendix 2 for a period of three years.

42 ANNUAL RE-RATIFICATION OF STRATEGY FOR NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOOD ALLIANCE

The Environmental Protection Manager introduced the report which provided the updated Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance's (NSFA) Strategy for annual re-ratification by Cabinet. The report also provided an outline as to how the Council and the wider Alliance was delivering against the Strategy and against the wider needs of communities which faced potential threats of flooding.

Members were advised that, chaired by Lord Dannatt, the NSFA had been established in early 2021 following the flooding experienced across Norfolk

over Christmas and New Year 2020. This had caused widespread impact and had highlighted how the resources of responding agencies were severely stretched, inconsistencies in the responses of different local authority areas and public confusion over which agency to contact as well as the level of response they could expect. The NSFA was made up of strategic lead officers and leaders from a range of agencies involved in flood response and water management across Norfolk. These agencies included:

- The Environment Agency
- Anglian Water
- The Association of Drainage Authorities
- The Water Management Alliance
- Water Resources East
- The Norfolk Resilience Forum
- The Broads Authority
- Norfolk's Local Authorities (including South Norfolk Council)

With regard to the work to be carried out by South Norfolk Council, the Environmental Protection Manager explained that the key planned activities for the Regulatory Service, and in particular the Flood and Water Management Officer, were to:

- Identify and map the flood risk threatened areas and past incidents, including surface water flooding.
- Prioritise higher risk flood-threatened local areas within the district for close attention, engaging with local communities and representatives.
- Deliver high quality planning consultation responses to maximise positive influence on flood prevention, mitigation, protection and resolution of significant issues and concerns. Doing this internally on non-major proposed new developments and working with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to maximise bespoke consultation on major proposed developments.
- Develop and deliver flood prevention and preparedness education and advice as a phased programme of activity to equip local people and ensure responsibilities are understood and exercised.
- Pursue a prioritised work programme to promote, inspect compliance with and enforce, where necessary, the responsibilities of riparian owners, prioritising areas for close attention and working through the areas of greatest risk. This would involve practical inspection and community work by a practical inspector gathering information to enable informal and formal enforcement.
- Enable better local community outcomes through flooding and water management policy and funding, strategic and partnering focus, strong positive relationships with stakeholders and key partner agencies.
- Promote local community resilience (flood action groups, community emergency plans, etc.).

The Committee expressed support for the re-ratification of the strategy and discussed the aims of the Council as well as the key planned activities to be undertaken. Concern was raised as to how the activities would be progressed and effectiveness measured. Members requested that officers attend the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee to present a strategic brief and delivery plan which would set out the key actions and measures.

One member felt that the perceived policy for flood water management was the immediate removal of surface water flooding and they suggested that more consideration be given to the temporary storage of the flood water, especially given the water shortages faced across the Country this summer. The Flood and Water Management Officer explained that there was a change of approach depending on the water catchment capability of the area (water catchment was easier in rural areas compared to urban areas). He added that schemes were in place across the County, such as 'reclaim the rain' which focussed on the catchment, temporary storage, re-use and percolation of rain and flood water.

Concerns were raised in relation to the lack of planning application consultee responses provided by Norfolk County Council. The Senior Environmental Management Officer advised the Committee that, due to staffing issues, Norfolk County Council had taken the decision to only respond to consultee requests for applications of 100 properties and above. She further clarified that, as the LLFA, the County Council had a statutory to consult on applications of 11 or more properties. The Flood and Water Management Officer added that, whilst his role involved responding to planning consultation requests in relation to small developments of between 1-10 properties, if resources allowed, there might be provision for him to comment on applications of between 11-99 properties as well, though he stressed that this was not guaranteed.

Discussion turned to the importance of identifying and mapping watercourses and areas at a higher flood risk within the South Norfolk District and the importance of working in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, as members felt that a lot of local knowledge was held at the Parish level. Officers explained that the additional role of a Riparian Responsibilities Officer had been created, whose role would be to work closely with Town and Parish Councils to GPS map all flood risk areas and waterways, as well as work with riparian owners to provide guidance on their responsibility to maintain the watercourse.

One member highlighted their residents' concerns over the Norfolk Highways handling of culverts, as a number of residents had complained of the lack of routine maintenance of culverts, restoration of lost ditches, as well as a lack of engagement. The Flood and Water Management Officer explained that, in some of cases, the resident and not Norfolk Highways may be responsible for the maintenance of culverts and ditches, adding that the Norfolk Highways

engineers would be able to confirm the riparian ownership. With regard to the lack of engagement with members and residents, the Flood and Water Management Officer could liaise with Norfolk Highways on the member's behalf, in cases where communication had stalled.

A number of members raised concerns over the lack of communication from the NSFA, the LLFA and the Council with regard to flooding advice and the publicising of achievements or actions undertaken. Members asked the Flood and Water Management Officer to bolster communication with local members as part of their role.

After further discussion it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To

1. Recommend that Cabinet ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1, and note the progress being made.

2. Request that officers attend the next Economy and Environment Policy Committee to advise how the planned activities will be progressed and how the effectiveness of the projects will be measured.

(The meeting concluded at 3.59pm)

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Chairman