



Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Friday 19 June 2020 at 2.00 pm

Committee Members Present: Councillors: A Dearnley (Chairman), C Brown, D Elmer, J Knight, T Laidlaw, R Savage, F Curson, G Francis and K Hurn

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: M Edney and J Halls

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Place (P Courtier), the Assistant Director of Regulatory Services (N Howard), the Environmental Management Officers (D Baillie-Murden and S Moore), the Contracts, Policy & Partnerships Manager (P Leggett) and the Environmental Protection Manager (T Cooke).

19 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee, held Friday 10 January 2020, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

Members considered the report of the Environmental Management Officers, which presented members with a revised version of the Environmental Plan.

The Chairman advised members that, as a joint strategy, members from both Broadland District Council's Environmental Excellence Panel and South Norfolk Council's Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee had been invited to comment on the document. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee due to be held on 20 March 2020 had been cancelled and members had instead been asked to submit their comments via email. The Committee was advised that the draft document had been annotated with the comments received, and members were invited to consider the amended draft Strategy, before its presentation to both Councils' Cabinet meetings on 21 July 2020.

Officers presented the Strategy and the Work So Far document in sections, inviting members of the Committee to consider the content, raise questions and suggest any revisions.

The Committee considered the Strategy's opening statement and stressed the importance of an ambitious main objective. After discussion, members agreed that the statement should be reworded, to read, "While working towards the Government target

of 2050, the Council aims to be carbon neutral well in advance of that". It was also agreed that some wording be added to place more emphasis on the rural aspects of the South Norfolk area.

During discussion, a member requested that the report should focus on clear targets, providing clarity to residents of what the Council intended to achieve. The Committee agreed that this would need to be taken into consideration in the public version of the document, to help create a clear and concise format for members of the public to view.

The Committee discussed the inclusion of two forewords in the Strategy and it was suggested that the difference in the respective priorities of each Council could possibly undermine from the collaborative nature of the document. Some members felt that the priorities of both Authorities should be aligned to strengthen a Joint Strategy but others considered that although the strategy was a joint document, the need for the two forewords from both Councils' Portfolio Holders was needed, to ensure member engagement with the document. The Committee recognised that the Strategy was a part of the ongoing collaboration journey between the two Councils and that recognisable differences between the Authorities must be accounted for when delivering strategies and policies.

Working through the Strategy, members considered the 'Clean and Safe Environment' and discussed noise pollution, bonfires and water quality. During discussion, it was suggested and agreed that the wording "avoid burning and bonfires" be added, to highlight these risks

In response to a member's question regarding the avoidance of pollution in ditches, culverts and rivers, it was reported that environment agencies were responsible for ensuring that landowners maintained the cleanliness of these areas. Following discussion, it was agreed that the wording, "periodically inspect and maintain any watercourses, which are your responsibility" be added to the Strategy relating to Water Quality and Management.

Members suggested that a statement be included in the Strategy to encourage the use of lower energy bulbs to alleviate the impact on the environment.

The Committee considered 'Sustainable Communities' and, in response to a member's concern that the draft Strategy did not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of suitable drainage systems, officers agreed to add the wording, "secure and enforce suitable urban drainage systems". It was also suggested that the Strategy should stress the Councils' commitment to proactively try to avoid climate change and the title of the section dealing with climate change should be changed to "Mitigation and Adaptation of Climate Change".

Members considered how the Councils might help residents and business owners to make energy-efficient changes to their day to day living through various means. A member suggested that the Council might seek out other organisations and work collaboratively to deliver a comprehensive plan.

Members referred to the Waste Minimisation section, focusing on the Councils' recycling rates. The Committee noted the recycling rate figures of 41.3% for South Norfolk and 48.2% for Broadland and officers suggested that , both Councils should be striving to achieve a 60% rate, in line with other Councils.

The discussion turned to food waste recycling and the plans to introduce it within South Norfolk, targeting the urban areas. After discussion, it was agreed that wording be added around the reduction of single-use wet wipes and not to flush them after use. It was also agreed that the wording “reduce your waste consumption” be added.

Members stressed the importance of the Sustainable Procurement section of the document highlighting the current impact of COVID-19. An officer suggested the addition of the words, “Local Procurement and shopping locally to help the local economy” be added into the section to draw the current climate into consideration. It was suggested and agreed that the bullet point, “Investing in suitable funds where appropriate”, was removed as members felt it was not in-keeping with the Environmental Strategy motivations.

In supporting the recommendations, Cllr Edney, the Portfolio Holder for the Clean and Safe Environment, suggested that, in order to improve the impact and readability of the Strategy, areas of the document could be split into four sections; Our Environment, the Environment, What the Council is Doing, and What the Residents and Businesses of South Norfolk can do to help meet the Council’s Environmental Aspirations. He expressed his support for green energy, but also stressed the need for it to be cost effective and affordable, and he raised the issue of waste and the need to ensure that supermarkets and retail addressed excessive packaging. With regard to benchmarking, he expressed his support for identifying best practice from other authorities but suggested that this needed to be with similar authorities, not necessarily with the bigger urban areas.

The Committee recognised the amount of work which had gone into the production of the Environmental Strategy, and thanked staff for their dedication and time. Voting was then carried out by roll-call, and it was unanimously agreed that the document, incorporating the suggested amendments where possible, should be presented for approval by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

1. To Recommend that Cabinet approves (subject to the agreed changes as detailed above):
 - (a) The Content of the Environment Strategy
 - (b) The content of the Work So Far document.

(The meeting concluded at 4.12 pm)

Chairman