

ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Excellence Policy Development Panel of Broadland District Council, held on Thursday 3 June 2021 at 6pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: K S Kelly (Chairman), N J Brennan, (Vice-Chairman), D J Britcher, J F Fisher, K E Lawrence, G K Nurden, S M Prutton, J M Ward.

Cabinet Member Present: Councillor: Cllr J Leggett

Officers in Attendance: The Assistant Director Community Services, Assistant Director Regulatory and the Environmental Coordinator.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr B Cook and Cllr A Crotch.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman drew members' attention to the twelfth paragraph of minute 62, Environmental Strategy Update, which stated that a presentation on 'rewilding' could be brought to today's meeting.

In response, the Assistant Director for Regulatory apologised for this oversight, but confirmed that this subject would complement the tree planting project, which was a major piece of work that the Environmental Coordinator would be bringing to a future meeting of the Panel.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Environmental Coordinator gave a presentation on key points from the Queen's Speech, COP26 and key changes to the Environment Bill, which related to the Council's Environmental Strategy, as well as work done on the five key priorities in her first two weeks in post and the next steps for

the coming months.

The Queen's Speech included reference to investing in green industries to create jobs, whilst protecting the environment. To meet this aim the Government had announced a follow up to the Green Home Grant and local authority delivery grants, which offered grants for domestic energy efficiency for low income households until 22/23 and would also support green jobs in the retrofit industry.

Also mentioned in the Queens Speech was the Net Zero commitment, which formed part of the Environment Bill and would seek to both reduce existing emissions and actively remove greenhouse gases.

At the COP26 summit to be held in Glasgow in November the four goals would be:

- To secure net zero emissions by 2050
- Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
- Mobilise finance
- Work together to deliver

Aims in the Environment Bill were:

- A Net Zero equivalent for nature that would require an additional legally binding target for species abundance for 2030, which aimed to halt the decline of nature.
- Funding opportunities for tree planting to meet the aim of planting 30,000 hectares per year in England by the end of this Parliament and to ensure that the right trees were planted in the right places.
- A ban on the use of peat in the amateur horticulture sector by 2024.
- Legally binding environmental targets for recycling and plastic packaging
- The appointment of Dame Glenys Stacey as Chair of the new, independent Office for Environmental Protection, which was created to hold Government and public bodies to account for their environmental credentials.

The following five key areas had been identified as quick wins for progressing the Environmental Strategy:

1. **Tree planting** – the Environmental Coordinator had investigated funding opportunities and had followed up on a request for support from Reepham. The next step would be to meet Norfolk County Council to look at joint working for counting trees planted, funding for a tiny forest and greater parish and town council involvement.
2. **Single use plastic reduction** – meetings with the Recycling Team and other Councils with similar plans had taken place. The next step would be to conduct an audit of single use plastics used by the Council and look at alternatives.
3. **Broadland's Green Energy Supplier** – in contract until 2024. The next step would be to meet with the Facilities Team and to investigate Green Tariffs.

4. **Procurement Strategy** – a new Strategy was being drafted. It was aimed to embed sustainability into how the Council procured services.
5. **Electric Vehicle Charging Points** – usage on similar car parks to those owned by the Council was to be investigated and followed up with the Economic Development Team.

A member noted that a scheme of tree planting in Hellesdon had not been very well managed by the tree wardens in that area. He also suggested that the Solar Together group buying scheme should be marketed more aggressively to promote better take up in the District.

Another member added that funds should be retained to ensure that young trees could be cared for after planting. The Chairman also noted the example of the trees planted on the Norwich Distributor Road, which had been planted in July and had suffered through neglect.

A Member suggested that in the longer-term updates should include indicators to show how the Environmental Strategy was progressing and to flag up any areas which might need further attention.

In answer to a query, the Environmental Coordinator confirmed that she would investigate if there were standards for peat free compost and report back to members.

The Assistant Director for Regulatory advised the meeting that the Environmental Coordinator had made an impressive start in such a short time in post by addressing the quick wins that had been identified in the Environmental Strategy. He noted that this work would build on the Action Plan and that the Panel would be regularly updated on its progress and that environmental indicators would be brought forward although these could sometimes be expensive and difficult to measure, so it might be better to focus on outcomes, measures and progress with the Environmental Strategy.

The Panel were then informed of a sustainable community analysis carried out by Liftshare a Norwich based social enterprise specialising in car sharing systems who had looked at sustainable travel options for One Team staff.

Liftshare had considered different options for home postcode to main office base, either at Thorpe Lodge or South Norfolk House. This information did not consider Covid-19 restrictions and that many staff were now working from home for at least part of their work time. The options and savings demonstrated were based on staff travelling to their main office base for all of their work days.

Five different sustainable travel modes were considered these were: liftsharing, public transport, cycling, walking or using park and ride. For those who worked at Thorpe Lodge 89 percent of employees had at least one sustainable travel mode available to them and 61 percent had four or more options available.

For staff who worked at South Norfolk House 86 percent of staff had at least one sustainable option, and 59 percent had at least four options. For staff who worked at Thorpe Lodge there were many more who had public transport, walking cycling or park and ride options. For South Norfolk House the main option that people had was to lift share.

It was clear that active travel could have great benefits to people's mental and physical health and whilst it was not always practical; with the right encouragement it was believed that some of the staff would switch to active travel some of the time.

There were also public transport alternatives available to many staff although only journeys that took less than twice as long were considered a viable alternative to driving.

The report considered where staff had a colleague living within one mile of them as an initial basis for making Liftshare connections and found that 74 percent of Thorpe Lodge based staff and 84 percent of South Norfolk House based staff had the possibility of a Liftshare match. The data was based on home postcode and office base although more work would need to be completed to determine if staff would be travelling to the office on the same day and if they would be happy to share a lift and if the timings for the day match and if they would like to be the driver or passenger.

The potential savings from sustainable commuting showed that if all staff who were close enough walked or cycled to work carbon savings would be 33 tonnes CO₂e and if 437 staff shared a lift to work the carbon savings would be 157 tonnes CO₂e.

The cost savings for staff by lift sharing would total £283,764 and the total miles saved would be 567,833.

The next steps would be to request further analysis from Liftshare to help evaluate options, taking into account the increase in staff working from home and to undertake a survey of staff who would consider lift sharing, to develop a full Liftshare plan.

A member suggested that Liftshare was fine in theory, but could be more difficult to put into practice, as individuals had different work patterns, priorities and responsibilities. It was suggested that a loan scheme for electric cycles could be introduced, so that staff who were lift sharing could use if they had an emergency that they needed to respond to.

The Chairman noted that there were still safety implications about officers coming into the office and that the working world had been changed by Covid-19. He also noted that it would be preferable to have meetings during the day, rather than in the evening, especially in winter.

In response to a suggestion from a member, it was confirmed that the Liftshare Scheme could be integrated with other nearby companies and organisations to make wider collective environmental gains.

5 RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT WASTE CONSULTATIONS

The report set out the responses submitted to the Government's recent consultations on introducing Extended Producer Responsibilities for packaging across the UK and the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme.

Officers felt that the consultations did not link in very well and did not tackle the reduction of packaging, but only how to deal with packaging. The Extended Producer Responsibilities consultation also lacked clarity about how local authorities would be reimbursed for some of the measures proposed.

The main impact of the Deposit Return Scheme would be the reduction of recycling tonnage due to glass being taken out of the recycling stream.

The Deposit Return Scheme also proposed making virtual payments to individuals and introducing reverse vending machines, where bottles could be deposited and credits given.

The third consultation looked to introduce greater consistency in household recycling. Two of the biggest proposed impacts would be the introduction of a universal food waste collection service and a free garden waste collection service. It was suggested that local authorities could be reimbursed for capital cost for bins and caddies, even those that had already been rolled out by local authorities such as Broadland. However, the Council could lose £1m per year income from charging for garden waste collection and there was a massive shortage of capacity for food waste processing in Norfolk, although this could also be an opportunity for the Council to invest in an anaerobic digester in the District.

A member noted that if producers were pressured into taking responsibility for the packaging they produced an element of self-regulation would emerge that would limit the types of materials used to make them more recyclable.

The Panel was advised that the Local Government Association was lobbying for the Deposit Return Scheme to be delayed until the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation was resolved.

AGREED

To note the report.

6 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC RESOLVED

to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining business because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, would be disclosed to them.

7 WASTE PROCUREMENT UPDATE

The Panel was advised that tender negotiations for the Waste Contract had ended today. The tenderers had taken account of the aim of 60 percent recycling, electric vehicles and kerbside collections. Final tenders would be received over 14 June to 5 July with a report being brought to the Panel on a date to be agreed.

8 FOOD WASTE AND GARDEN WASTE DISPOSAL CONTRACT

The exempt report asked for approval to award a new contract for the disposal of food waste and to extend the current garden waste disposal contract with for one year.

Following discussion the Panel:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET to

1. Proceed with the award of a contract for the processing of food waste, as set out in the report;
2. Proceed with the award of a one year extension for the processing of garden waste, as set out in the report;
3. Commence with a joint procurement with Norwich City Council for the procurement of a garden waste disposal contract from 19th September 2022, and to delegate any decisions regarding the length/type of contract to the Director of People and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence.

(The meeting concluded at 7.14 pm)

Chairman