

# **ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a remote meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk District Council, held on Friday 12 February 2021 at 2pm.**

<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillors: A Dearnley (Chairman), B Bernard, V Clifford-Jackson, F Curson, D Elmer, G Francis, K Hurn, J Knight and R Savage.
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	C Brown with V Clifford-Jackson as substitute
<b>Officers in Attendance:</b>	Assistant Director Community Services (S Phelan), Assistant Director Regulatory (N Howard), Policy and Partnerships Officer (V Parsons), Recycling and Partnerships Officer (L Fountain) Contracts, Policy and Partnerships Manager (P Leggett), and the National Management Trainee (A Langley)

## **11 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee held on 16 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chairman asked the Assistant Director for Regulatory to update the Committee on the Environmental Strategy's progress since the last meeting. Members noted that officers had now identified the next steps in implementing the Strategy. Members were pleased to note the advert for the new Environmental Coordinator role was being published soon. Officers also explained the work undertaken to identify staffing support within the key projects of the Environmental Strategy.

The National Management Trainee gave members an update on the tree planting scheme, explaining that the Council's Strategy target was to plant one tree per South Norfolk resident. Work was now focused on the aftercare of trees once planted with appointments of tree wardens in the community. Members also noted the work carried out on finding suitable sites for the trees, these areas included schools and parishes but alternatively within local

businesses to off-set their carbon neutral targets. A further update was given to members which included electric charging points installation and environmental enforcement. The Committee noted that a fly-tipping report would be coming to them in the future.

In response to a query raised on the type of trees going to be used, officers confirmed that only native trees would be planted. Officers also confirmed that where possible, trees would be planted to help aid potential flooding areas.

Following a question raised around the number of electric charging points installed, it was noted that the project was at its scoping stage, where the cost and areas were still being investigated.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their update on the Environmental Strategy.

## **12 RECYCLING INITIATIVES UPDATE REPORT**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented the report, which outlined proposals that the Council could explore further to achieve a 60 per cent recycling rate by 2025, following input from the Committee at its meeting on 16 October 2020. The report contained a short Action Plan with proposed work streams for the Committee to discuss and comment on.

In response to a query asking if the council was being over ambitious with the 60 percent recycling rate by 2025, officers confirmed that while the target was ambitious this was still an achievable target to hit. Members noted that work was being optimised to achieve this gradually, and by the end of 2021, a growth of two percent within the Council's recycling rates would be achieved.

Following a discussion by members on recycling contamination, the Committee stressed that changing people's behaviours on recycling would see the biggest impact on recycling rates. A member raised concern over hidden plastics within products, adding that it was easy to confuse recyclable items and ones that were not. Officers acknowledged the concerns raised and emphasised the need for information circulated from the Council would need to be clear to highlight issues. After officers had answered further questions on specific items, it became clear that a stance would need to be made on educating the younger generation and businesses to help tackle the concerns. Officers confirmed that an initial meeting had taken place with Youth Advisory Board representatives and a joint South Norfolk and Broadland YAB workshop was in the planning stages. A member suggested working with the YAB in relation to social media campaigns to increase communication in the district.

Officers also confirmed that notices were left with residents who mixed general waste in their recycling bins.

In response to a question raised by a member regarding the reintroduction of recycling days set up in local village halls where residents could drop items off, officers confirmed that these days had been successful in the past and it was hoped that when the pandemic had ended these events would restart.

During a discussion on the potential introduction of a food waste service within the South Norfolk area, one member asked if a trial area could be arranged near a neighbouring Broadland District area. Officers confirmed that there was currently no capacity within the current operating structure to allow this. Officers also confirmed that a food waste service within the District had been explored, but to accommodate this service the current depot would need to be expanded. It was noted that whilst some authorities combine food waste and garden waste services, this service was unavailable in the South Norfolk area.

In response to concerns raised over the possible reduction of the size of the waste bins, members were keen for officers to evaluate other areas where the changes had occurred, in order to understand any possible repercussions. A proposal for the Council to introduce charges for additional side waste formed part of the action plan officers were hopeful that this would discourage residents from leaving out extra waste.

Several members raised concerns over the increased impact of single-use PPE as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested that people consider using reusable masks in their day to day lives.

In response to a query raised by a member regarding separate nappy collections within the District, it was agreed that officers would take this away to explore further.

A member raised concerns over the wording of recommendation two and its impact on the South Norfolk residents within the current climate. The member noted the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the lives of the South Norfolk residents both financially and in their lifestyles, stating that adding further costs into the side waste service could create more harm. Officers explained that most neighbouring Councils did not accept side waste and the possible introduction of charging was thought to help discourage people who needed it. After further discussion, it was agreed to amend the wording on recommendation two to read *in collaboration with the Waste Service to reduce side waste through the introduction of a variety of mechanisms which might include charging*. The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Voting was then carried out by way of roll-call, and it was unanimously:

## **RESOLVED**

To

1. support scoping of reducing residual waste work streams, as per Section 4 that will contribute to increasing the Council's recycling rate and are outside of the Government proposals; and
2. support the development of a proposal to be taken forward to Cabinet; in collaboration with the Waste Service to reduce side waste through the introduction of a variety of mechanisms which might include charging; and
3. support commencement of behavioural change work streams as in section 4.2, that will contribute to increasing recycling rates, reducing residual tonnage and reduce contamination rates and are outside of the Government proposals; and
4. note current situation and to support participation in the Government's consultations to inform the consistency requirements for food and garden waste collections in preparation for introduction in 2023.

(The meeting concluded at 4.10 pm)

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Chairman