

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk District Council, held on Wednesday 30 March 2022 at 10am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Knight (Chairman), C Brown, J Overton, S Nuri-Nixon and R Savage

Apologies: Councillors: G Francis and K Hurn

Substitute: Councillors: N Legg (for G Francis) and D Bills (for K Hurn)

Cabinet Member in Attendance: Councillors: G Minshull and L Neal

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Place (P Courtier), the Assistant Director of Economic Growth (G Denton) and the Assistant Director of Community Services (S Phelan)

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Bills declared an 'other' interest in respect of minute number 31, Progress towards carbon net-zero, accelerating our growth agenda and our environment – in year opportunities, as a Director of NORSE Environmental Waste Services Ltd.

30 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee held on 28 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

31 PROGRESS TOWARDS CARBON NET-ZERO, ACCELERATING OUR GROWTH AGENDA AND OUR ENVIRONMENT – IN YEAR OPPORTUNITIES

The Assistant Director of Economic Growth and Assistant Director of Community Services presented the report, which outlined the proposed

projects and initiatives with regard to the use of the in-year additional income, saving and efficiencies that would enable the Council to accelerate its progress towards the initiatives set out in the delivery plan.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs)

The Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained this project looked to increase the number of EVCPs at Council owned sites, support the installation of EVCPs in Town and Parish Council owned sites, and to support the provision of a 'minimum viable network' as part of the Broads Electrification Project. Members were informed that the financial commitment had been amended to £350,000 and that, where possible, the Council would access grant funding to support the cost of delivery. In response to a query, the Assistant Director of Economic Growth advised that a full business case, including charger options and full costings, would be brought to Cabinet in June.

Solar Panels on Diss, Long Stratton and Wymondham Leisure Centres, and Kett's Park

Members were reminded of the Council's recent Carbon Audit, which had identified the Leisure Centres as one of the main contributors to the Council's carbon footprint as well as large consumers of gas and electricity. The installation of solar panels at the three leisure centres had the potential to save up to 30% of the current electricity used at each site. It was now proposed that Kett's Park also be included within the initiative. The Assistant Director of Community Services explained a full survey and options appraisal of each site would be carried out in phase one of the initiative.

Members noted that Kett's Park was leased by the Council. The Assistant Director of Community Services explained that there was 18 years remaining in the current lease and that a full breakdown of costs and the pay-back period would be sought prior to the initiative being delivered.

In response to a query, the Assistant Director of Community Services advised that the use of solar thermal panels to heat water at Wymondham and Diss leisure centres had been ruled out at this stage as it was unlikely that the panel could heat the water to the necessary temperature needed in the swimming pools.

Solar Panel Carports in car parks at Wymondham, Diss and Long Stratton Leisure Centres and Kett's Park

The Assistant Director of Community Services outlined the initiative and explained that officers had considered the implementation of 15 spaces at each of the leisure centres, which would mean that there would be no additional costs for the inclusion of carports at Kett's Park.

One member queried the need for 60 solar panel carports across the district, given that only a small number of the population could afford the high cost of electric vehicles. Other members felt that the cost of electric vehicles was starting to reduce and a second-hand market was beginning to develop. It was also noted that the availability of charging points in the district could encourage those without driveways/suitable charging access to purchase electric vehicles.

During further discussion members queried the costs of individual chargers and carports. The Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained that the costs were dependent on a number of factors such as the location, rate of the charger or access to grants, and that a breakdown of the costs for each site would be included in the business case.

New Posts in Economic Growth

The Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained the proposed additional posts, which were sought in response to the creation of the Community Infrastructure Loan Scheme in order to build on existing relationships with Town and Parish Councils, support the creation of infrastructure plans and help deliver key infrastructure. He further advised that an additional post of a Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager, which had previously been approved by Cabinet, would also be recruited.

Members were informed that the earmarked reserves would fund each post for two years, and the ambition was to obtain external funding to continue the posts long-term, however, if the additional funding could not be sourced, the posts would not be extended.

Members expressed their support for the additional posts, which would enable the Council to implement its ambitious plans. The Committee queried how the progress towards achieving the Council's projects would be monitored moving forward and the Director of Place agreed to report back to the Committee at a future meeting.

Loddon Staithe Bridge Repairs

Member's attention was drawn to the Loddon Staithe Bridge Repairs project, which would allow for the reopening of a pedestrian link across the river and create a lasting memorial for the Queen's Jubilee. The Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained that a previous survey estimated the repair work at £40,000. To take into account the uplift in the cost of materials, a £75,000 budget was proposed for the delivery of this project.

Wymondham Traffic Flow Improvements

The Assistant Director of Economic Growth outlined the proposed Wymondham Traffic Flow Improvements project which aimed to maintain the

improved conditions for pedestrians which had been put in place via a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) during Covid restrictions. He explained that this would increase dwell time, make the Market Cross more accessible and provide space for quality street furniture. Members were further advised that, although the one-way system was met with significant opposition when first implemented, there was now support from residents and businesses for a permanent scheme. Formal stakeholder engagement would need to be sought before delivery.

One member raised concerns over the need for traffic flow improvements in Wymondham. Other members expressed the view that there was a significant need for the work to be carried out and felt that it was a modest sum of money to improve the area and the safety of pedestrians.

In response to members' queries, the Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained that the project may not be delivered within the time scale, and that if needed, there was capacity within the Capital Programme to fund the project.

After further discussion, the Chairman proposed that the Committee did not recommend this project to Cabinet as part of the earmarked reserves for Accelerating Economic Growth and Prosperity. He requested for the item to be brought back to a future meeting as a separate project. This proposal was supported by the Committee.

Improving Recycling Behaviours

The Assistant Director of Community Services explained that this proposed initiative was a joint project across South Norfolk and Broadland Councils. It sought to work with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to develop a targeted communication strategy and infographics to improve residents' recycling behaviours to reduce contamination and increase recycling levels to assist in meeting the Councils 60% recycling rate target by 2025. The Council's current rate was at 47.2% (Government's target had been increased to 70%).

Members were informed that the initiative would build upon a project undertaken by Broadland District Council, which was not completed due to Covid 19.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that, subject to the removal of the Wymondham Traffic Flow Improvements project, it progresses with all projects and initiatives outlined within the report.

2. To request that officers provide a report to the Committee outlining how the Wymondham Traffic Flow Improvements could be progressed outside of the earmarked reserves.

(The meeting concluded at 11.02am)

Chairman