

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held on Thursday 26 January 2023 at 10.00am.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: J Hornby (Chairman), Y Bendle, B Bernard, J Halls, T Holden, J Rowe, T Spruce and J Overton.

**Officers in Attendance:** The Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director for Economic Growth (G Denton), the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager (A Sommazzi), the Environmental Coordinator (K Burns), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Democratic Services Officer (L Arthurton)

### **1330 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

### **1331 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received from members.

### **1332 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 November 2022, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **1333 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN**

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager introduced the report, which updated members on the work undertaken over the last 12 months as part of the existing Environmental Strategy, along with the updated Environmental Strategy and associated Delivery Plan.

Members noted that the Council adopted the current Environmental Strategy in 2020, and the table in section two of the report showed its progress. Following this, Officers drafted a revised version of the Strategy, which collates the achievements to date while setting more ambitious environmental targets. The Committee's attention was drawn to the two new key commitments in the revised Strategy: the 2030 Net-Zero target for

organisational emissions and a commitment to align with the Government's 2050 target for wider district decarbonisation.

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager further explained that the Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan would continue to be a living document and would be updated annually to address additional local priorities and opportunities. Progress against any activities would be fed back to members as part of the existing performance management structure.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and opened up the meeting for comments and questions.

A member raised an area of concern regarding the electric charging points within car parks and the electrical grid supply issues. Officers explained that the initiation of the charging points delivery in car parks would be subjected to a feasibility study, investigating any potential issues. The Committee noted the ongoing issues with grid connectivity and capacity in the District and that this was a regional issue. Officers further explained that wider discussions were taking place to resolve issues.

In response to a query on whether the Council had recruited to the Environmental Enforcement Officer role, officers confirmed that the position sits with another team at the Council but was in the process of being filled.

The discussion turned to scope-three emissions within the District and what was being done to reduce the impact on the environment. Members heard that this section of work was encompassed in the decarbonisation audit. One member shared the importance of challenging organisations to lower theirs. Reference was made to the Council's own, and Committee noted that the inhouse waste and leisure services reduced the Council's overall impact and that the updated procurement strategy would also reduce this further.

Reference was made to the emissions increase in transportation noted in the report. Members heard that the table in the report presented district-wide figures, which the Council could not control. Concerning the top emitters in the district, members noted that work was being undertaken to support businesses to reduce their emissions. This was also supported by the New Anglia LEP.

One member requested that a yearly update of the Strategy be programmed in to allow a focused review to take place on progress. Officers confirmed that the annual review of corporate delivery plans of the Council would encompass Environmental Delivery Plan, but officers would be happy to present any updates to the Committee when required.

In response to a question on the Leisure Centres' Solar panels, officers explained that work was being carried out to understand what was required, which included battery storage facilities.

Members noted that through staff training and development, the Council now had the resource to measure its carbon footprint details, which was to be assessed annually and published.

After a member asked whether domestic wind turbines were included and encouraged as part of the Environmental Strategy, the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager explained that the technology surrounding the use of turbines was moving at pace but was difficult to scope and currently the council's solar together scheme focussed on solar panels. The presented Strategy was designed to focus on emission reduction, but members noted that options for turbines could be included at a later point in the Strategy's development.

A brief discussion followed, during which members discussed the possibility of the Strategy stating that the Council looks favourably at planning applications that relate to solar energy or vehicle charging points. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth explained that the Strategy needs to support wider growth and that this was a more nuanced issue. He advised that he would contact the Planning Department to understand what could be achieved regarding this and the Committee noted that the team already worked closely with colleagues in the Planning Department regarding applications of this kind.

In response to a query on improvements being made to existing electric charging points in the Council owned car parks, members noted that work was being carried out to improve charging KW rates and customer experience. A follow-up question was asked, regarding electric charging points being installed in Village Hall car parks. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth explained that there had been issues with land ownership negotiations, but an additional officer was coming into the team to support the project.

It was then unanimously;

## **RESOLVED**

To

1. Receive the update on the work undertaken in the last 12 months in regard to the current Environmental Strategy
2. Recommend to Cabinet that it approve the adoption of the revised draft Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan

**1334 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE  
AGENDA**

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 10.38am)

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Chairman