

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING, AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Development Panel of Broadland District Council, held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on Wednesday 8 February 2023 at 6pm.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: J Ward (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), N Brennan, A Crotch, N Harpley, E Laming, D Thomas
Also present	Councillor: F Whymark (ex-officio)
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors: M Murrell, J Neesam
Officers in Attendance:	The Place Shaping Manager (P Harris) and the Democratic Services Officer (D Matthews)
Also in attendance:	The Active Travel Team Leader – Norfolk County Council (E Parnaby)

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Murrell and J Neesam.

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13 COUNTYWIDE LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN OVERVIEW

The Active Travel Team Leader, Edward Parnaby, Norfolk County Council introduced the report about the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Norfolk. Norfolk County Council (NCC) were working in partnership with local authorities to create the LCWIP to help identify and prioritise short, medium and long-term active travel infrastructure schemes which would enable increased levels of cycling, walking and wheeling in the county. LCWIP's would support the Government's ambition for 50% of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030. Mr Parnaby took members through a presentation, a copy of which was included within the agenda papers for the meeting. He explained that the creation of the LCWIP was important in helping to secure Government funding for this work. The County's track record in delivering such schemes was also taken into account. Similar Plans had already been created in Kings Lynn, Greater Norwich and Great Yarmouth. The key outputs from the creation of the LCWIP would be the creation of a network plan and identification of priority routes, a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for the short, medium and longer term and the production of a report setting out the analysis carried out to support the improvements and growing network. Mr Parnaby went on to outline the 6 stages involved in the preparation of the Plan and that the County Council were now at stage 5 – prioritising improvements following the identification routes. This phase included a 6 week period of public and stakeholder engagement which was due to commence in March 2023.

Members were advised that 4 areas in Broadland had been identified for proposals: Aylsham, Acle, Reepham and Wroxham & Hoveton and Mr Parnaby took members through each of the proposals. He also made reference to the various planning, transport, environment and air quality and public health policies which had informed the work to date. An earlier public engagement exercise to gauge views on the proposals and identify barriers to cycling had been undertaken which had also informed the proposals and a number of sites had been visited. A significant and substantial amount of work had been undertaken to arrive at the current stage.

The public and stakeholder engagement proposals included an online survey in addition to approximately 7 public events which would be held across the County including one in Wroxham.

Discussion then took place during which Mr Parnaby answered questions from members. It was suggested that existing routes could be better utilised if they were upgraded and existing paths could be better connected. A concern was also raised about safety of users on woodland or remote routes and around crossings such as the NDR. Mr Parnaby explained that the detailed proposals as to how the existing network would be upgraded/connected were still to be finalised and user safety would be considered and appropriate measures put in place where possible. Some potential solutions such as cameras and lighting needed careful examination. Mr Parnaby undertook to establish if any safe street organisations had been involved in the engagement already undertaken.

A member commented that existing local running/cycling groups were a valuable resource with much local knowledge.

A comment was made that some of the maps used in the plan were overly annotated and the colouring was not always clear to all users. Mr Parnaby acknowledged this comment and added that the maps did include a narrative relating to each route and efforts would be made to ensure the documents were as accessible as possible. In response to a comment about pedestrian zones, Mr Parnaby confirmed that any proposed pedestrian zones would encourage pedestrian priority over other traffic but not exclude vehicles.

In welcoming the proposals, a member commented that they felt the proposals did not go far enough and a greater vision would be welcomed. The also commented that some current cycle ways were very difficult to negotiate – even by experienced cyclists and they hoped any new/improved schemes would be designed for easier use. The member also asked about the methods for evaluating and measuring the use of the new and improved routes. They felt the Government's target to achieve 50% of all journeys to be walked or cycled by 2030 was very ambitious. Mr Parnaby stated that work was well underway on other schemes with funding in place and the current proposals were progressing well. Data gathering was a challenge, but it was hoped to utilize some of the funding available to develop improved data collection. The County Council would be held to account for the scheme and would be required to demonstrate outcomes by way of independent review by the University of East Anglia.

Members thanked Mr Parnaby for his presentation and expressed their support for the proposals.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To receive the overview of the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan ahead of the 6-week public engagement exercise.

14 GREATER NORWICH 5 YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager which set out

- The draft Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2023 to 2028. The five year plan included: a progress report on previously approved projects; proposals for new projects to be funded by pooled Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2023/24, otherwise known as the 2023/24 Annual Growth Programme (AGP); updated forecasts of CIL income; and, information on future project priorities.
- Proposals for three amendments to the existing Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF) procedures/practice.
- A proposed deed of variation to be agreed to the Greater Norwich Partner Drawdown and Borrowing Authorisations agreement to enable delivery of the Long Stratton Bypass.

It was noted that, in accordance with the CIL pooling arrangements for Greater Norwich's Infrastructure Investment Fund, each of the three CIL charging authorities: Broadland District Council; Norwich City Council; and, South Norfolk Council needed to separately agree to the recommendations for them to take effect.

The Place Shaping Manager explained that the new projects needed to be ready to come forward and be fully evaluated in terms of delivering significant infrastructure across the area. New projects for this year included one scheme in Broadland but the district had benefitted from a number of schemes the previous year.

He also explained the changes proposed to the scheme to create 2 new categories to the Infrastructure Investment Fund - the Major infrastructure Projects and Match Funding – which would remove the restrictions in supporting key strategic pieces of major infrastructure which might not previously had been eligible as they were not ready to proceed in the next financial year. Eligible schemes could be put forward at any point in time and subject to being fully evaluated could then be earmarked for funding. With regard to match funding, the proposal was to create a ring fenced pot of money within the IIF which could be allocated to major projects as match funding when applying for other significant government grants. The match funding pot would be overseen by the Greater Norwich Growth Board under delegated authority from the district partners.

With regard to education funding allocations from the IIF, a change was being proposed to allow Norfolk County Council to utilise CIL funding in whole or in part to repay NCC's own borrowing used to underwrite future shortfalls of funding to safeguard the medium to long term school capital programme.

With regard to the proposed deed of variation to the Greater Norwich Partner Draw-down and Borrowing Authorisations agreement, the Place Shaping Manager explained that this would enable the agreed Long Stratton Bypass loan to be added as originally intended.

Discussion then took place during which a member raised concerns about the proposals. They commented that the existing agreements had been in place for a number of years and questioned why was there a need to now change the arrangements. They feared this may tie up funds on long term major infrastructure projects, potentially road projects such as the western link, with less money available for smaller, more local infrastructure.

The Place Shaping Manager responded that there needed to be a balance of funding smaller and larger infrastructure projects and the existing scheme had limitations in the ability to support larger infrastructure projects. He was not aware that any large scale projects had as yet been identified. The levels of funding made available would be determined by each partner council and major projects such as the western link were likely to be more costly than the limit proposed for the new scheme (£4m) and would warrant a separate arrangement.

In response to a comment that the funding allocated for the Sloughbottom Park project appeared low by comparison to other schemes, the Place Shaping Manager explained that other sources of funding were being explored which were likely to meet most of the costs. CIL funding tended to be used as a final step in fulfilling a funding gap. Any variations in funding allocated would need to be approved by partner councils.

Members then voted on the recommendations and it was with 4 members voting for, 1 against and 1 abstention,

RESOLVED

To recommend that Cabinet

- a) Approves the Draft Five year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2023-28 and the proposed 2023/24 Annual Growth Programme, including:
 - i) The introduction of two new categories to the Infrastructure Investment Fund, Match Funding and Major Infrastructure Projects;
 - ii) That Education funding allocations from the Infrastructure Investment Fund can be used in whole or in part to repay Norfolk County Council's borrowing, on condition that it is used to support the delivery of a Schools Capital Programme that is ring fenced to the Greater Norwich area, and that annual programme delivery and budget updates are reported to the GNGB;
- b) Agrees to the signing of a deed of variation to the agreement entitled, Partner Drawdown and Borrowing Authorisations, that was originally signed by all partners on 21st October 2015 and to delegate authority to the Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Communities and Housing to finalise and sign any such variation.

15 NORFOLK RECREATIONAL IMPACT AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION (RAMS) PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager which sought agreement to the proposed organisational structure to enable the effective and efficient implementation and delivery of the Norfolk Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS).

The Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) had been prepared by the 8 Local Planning Authorities of Norfolk in conjunction with Norfolk County Council to deliver the mitigation necessary to avoid adverse effects from the 'in-combination' impacts of residential development forecast to be delivered across Norfolk until 2038 at internationally designated sites.

Each of the Norfolk Authorities had now adopted the Norfolk GIRAMS and were now collecting relevant RAMS contributions from qualifying development.

The implementation and delivery of the Norfolk RAMS programme would require a coordinated approach, with developer contributions being directed to deliver joint, cross boundary mitigation projects to protect the affected Habitat sites. In order to effectively and efficiently manage such a programme, it was proposed to:

- 1) establish an overseeing Member programme board made up of Members of the contributing authorities;
- 2) appoint a RAMS Delivery Officer hosted by Norfolk County Council; and,
- 3) authorise Norfolk County Council to act as the Accountable Body for the delivery of the Norfolk RAMS.

The proposals had been discussed and agreed as the best way forward by the Norfolk Strategic Planning Forum.

In response to a question, the Place Shaping Manager confirmed that the full details of any agreement were still to be prepared but that he expected that they would include a withdrawal clause should the need arise.

Members then voted on the recommendations and it was, with 5 members voting for, 1 abstention,

RESOLVED

To recommend that Cabinet

1. Agrees for Norfolk County Council to act as the Accountable Body for the Norfolk Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS), to include agreement for RAMS tariff contributions received by Broadland District Council to be transferred to and held by Norfolk County Council in accordance with this responsibility;
2. Agrees to establish a Norfolk RAMS Board comprising representative from each of the Norfolk Authorities to oversee the operation of Norfolk County Council as Accountable Body;
3. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Housing and Planning to finalise any partnership legal agreement and Terms of Reference related to recommendations 1 and 2.

(The meeting concluded at 7.12pm)

Chairman