

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environmental Excellence Panel** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **24 January 2019** at **4.00 pm** when there were present:

Mr J F Fisher – Chairman

Mrs J K Copplestone
Mr R F Grady
Mrs J Leggett

Mr I J Mackie
Mr G K Nurden
Mrs B H Rix

Mr J M Ward

Mrs M Dewsbury, Mr K Kiddie, Mr T Lewis, Mrs J Wilby and Mr M Wilby (South Norfolk Councillors) also attended the meeting for its duration.

Also in attendance were the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Communities and Wellbeing (SNC), Head of Environmental Services (BDC), Environmental Protection Manager (Special Projects), Pollution Control Officer, Environmental Management Officer (SNC), Renewable and Energy Efficiency Officer, and the Committee Officer (JO).

The Chairman welcomed Members of South Norfolk Council's Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee to the meeting.

28 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr Tapp.

29 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 OUR WASTE, OUR RESOURCES: A STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND – SUMMARY

Members were advised that the Resources and Waste Strategy, which was published in late 2018, contained some very significant proposals for preserving material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy.

Consultations on various elements of the Strategy would begin early in 2019 and it was envisaged that Broadland and South Norfolk would send similar responses. There would also likely be a coordinated response on behalf of the Norfolk Waste Partnership.

Chapter One of the Strategy covered Sustainable Production and set out proposals for a 'polluter pays' principle and producer responsibility for the disposal of packaging, textiles, tyres etc. This was likely to create a greater demand on local authorities to produce high quality recycled materials, but could also lead to up to £1.3b in savings to the public sector. Legislation for this was scheduled to come into force in 2023, subject to consultation.

There were also proposals for introducing a tax on plastic packaging with less than 30 percent recycled plastic, as well as encouraging more efficient product design, managing chemicals sustainably and working with businesses to realise resource efficiencies.

Chapter Two had proposals for incentivising consumers to purchase sustainably by providing better information on products, banning plastic products where alternatives existed, introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for single-use drinks containers, supporting remanufactured goods. The Government would also seek to lead by example through appropriate sustainable procurement.

Chapter three contained proposals for resource recovery and waste management. These included; improvements to recycling rates through more consistent collections of dry recycling, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by weekly separate food waste collections and improving working arrangements and performance between local authorities.

Chapter four had proposals for tackling waste crime by reforming existing regulations, strengthen intelligence sharing, the digital recording of waste movements, establishing a Joint Unit for Waste Crime and tougher penalties for waste criminals.

Members were advised that a Norfolk-wide campaign to combat fly tipping was being launched in Norwich on 31 January 2019.

Chapter five put an emphasis on reducing food waste by redistributing food to those in need before it went to waste, better storage advice for consumers, annual reporting of food surplus and waste by businesses, mandatory targets for food waste prevention, a new food surplus and waste hierarchy, appointing a Food Waste Champion and support cross sector collaboration through the Courtauld 2025 agreement.

Chapter six proposed promoting Britain as a global leader in minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy.

Chapter seven covered research and innovation in five key areas. These were extended producer responsibility, resource efficiency and the circular economy, minimising environmental impacts of waste, food waste and plastics.

Finally chapter eight looked at measuring progress by working with partners and stakeholders to develop new approaches to data on resources and waste and move to impact-based, rather than from weight-based, targets.

Members were advised that the Strategy contained proposals that would transform how waste would be managed in England. Many of the proposals in the Strategy would be subject to consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development suggested that an anaerobic digester in Norfolk would be a good means of reducing the carbon emissions created by transporting food waste to Baldock. She also suggested that the recycling of plastics used in agriculture should be looked at.

In response, Members were advised that the facility that the Council currently used had a 45,000 capacity and cost £12m to build. Even if all the Councils in Norfolk collected food waste this would not be enough tonnage to justify a facility of this size. It was also confirmed that the finances of food waste processing was distorted by the levels of Feed in Tariff that they received. The recycling of agricultural plastics was also problematic due to their levels of contamination.

It was also confirmed that Norfolk's residual waste was incinerated outside of the county and none went to landfill.

The Chairman requested that certain proposed responses to the consultations be brought to the Panel for consideration ahead of submission. The first one being the consultation on the Deposit Return Scheme for single-use drinks containers and ensuring that a consistent set of recyclable materials were collected from homes and businesses. The food waste reporting response should also be brought to the Panel. Other consultation responses could be delegated to officers or Portfolio Holder sign-off as appropriate.

The Chairman also noted that by sending similar responses Broadland and South Norfolk would demonstrate to the Government that both authorities were taking a proactive approach to partnership working on waste management.

Members were also advised that both Councils had encouraged groups to take up environmental initiatives locally, such as persuading shops to use paper instead of plastic bags, and would continue to do so.

31 CLEAN AIR STRATEGY 2019

The Pollution Control Officer informed the meeting about the activities that Broadland and South Norfolk undertook to monitor air quality in both districts

and the proposals in the Clean Air Strategy 2019 to tackle sources of air pollution across the Country.

Both Councils were required to submit an Air Quality Status Report on an annual basis. These were produced by monitoring levels of Nitrogen Dioxide at a number of locations across both Districts (21 in Broadland and 29 in South Norfolk) in areas where traffic regularly queued or was slow moving.

Air quality in Broadland and South Norfolk was generally good, mainly because they were not intensively built up or industrialised and had large rural areas.

Both authorities were Members of the Norfolk Environmental Protection Group, which had met that day to discuss the Clean Air Day in June, when drivers would be encouraged to turn their engines off when idling in traffic. Broadland and South Norfolk were also part of the Greater Norwich Air Quality Group, which was looking at possible means of reducing emissions from vehicles. The Group also supported Norfolk County Council in applications for grants to fund less polluting buses.

The Clean Air Strategy 2019 proposed actions to reduce air pollution in four key areas: Transport, Domestic, Agriculture and Industry.

In respect of transport the Strategy proposed establishing a network of electric vehicle charging points every 20 miles across 95 percent of the country and to work with local authorities to bring down nitrogen dioxide levels where it was a significant pollutant. Use of new materials for tyres and brakes would also be encouraged, to reduce non exhaust particulate emissions.

Maritime, air, rail and road transport were also being looked at and a modal shift from road to rail freight was being encouraged. Improving public transport was also an ambition, as was encouraging walking and cycling.

In the home, action would be taken to legislate to prohibit the sale of the most polluting fuels and ensure that only the cleanest wood burning stoves were available for sale from 2023.

Non-methane volatile organic compounds from a wide variety of chemicals that were found in carpets, upholstery, paint, cleaning, fragrance, and personal care products were a significant source of indoor pollution. To reduce the build-up of harmful levels of air pollution within homes, work would be undertaken to consult on changes to standards of Building Regulations relating to ventilation in homes and other buildings.

In agriculture the Government would work with farmers to reduce ammonia emissions caused by the storage and spreading of manures and slurries and

from the application of inorganic fertilisers. Mandatory design standard for livestock housing would also be introduced and environmental permitting would be extended to the dairy and intensive beef sectors to reduce ammonia emissions.

To reduce emissions from industry the Government would seek to build on existing good practice to deliver a stable and predictable regulatory environment for business as part of a clean green economy.

Lastly, an Environment Bill would be introduced to replace EU legislation and to ensure that best practice was maintained.

The Chairman noted that currently the Environment Agency had responsibility for power stations, but those producing less than 50W might be regulated by local authorities in the future.

In response to a query, Members were advised that the wood burning stoves would need to either meet Building Regulations or be installed by an approved fitter. The quality of the wood would probably be monitored by Trading Standards. Agriculture would possibly be monitored by the Environment Agency.

The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the Council could have an emerging leadership role in this area, as it already had a range of Public Health duties to improve the health of the population in the district.

A Member noted that there would be a significant cost attached to many of these initiatives and he would like to see better financial incentives for them. However, the wider savings for the NHS to the country as a whole from the proposals were also noted.

The Panel was informed that a Joint Environmental Strategy for Broadland and South Norfolk was being drafted and would be brought to the 21 March 2019 meeting of the Panel. It would then go out for a six week consultation period before consideration by Cabinet in June 2019. The Strategy would be the same for both authorities, but would have individual Action Plans tailored for each Council.

32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21 March 2019

The meeting closed at 5.38 pm