BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on Tuesday, 8th April, 2025 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT:

Councillors P Bland, A Bullen (on Zoom), S Collop (on Zoom), R Colwell, P Devulapalli (Chair), D Heneghan and P Kunes

Portfolio Holders

Councillor M de Whalley- Climate Change and Biodiversity
Councillor J Rust- People and Communities

Officers:

Martin Chisholm – Assistant Director, Operations and Commercial
Jacob Medlock - Housing Standards Officer - Energy Efficiency

External Attendees

Representatives from Freebridge Community Housing

Abbie Panks- Head of Communications and Marketing
Laura Handford- Head of New Homes and Commercial
Steve Elmore- Energy and Sustainability Manager

EC80: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barclay and Sandell.

EC81: **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC82: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EC83: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC84: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Collop and Councillor Bullen was present under Standing Order 34 on Zoom.

EC85: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC86: **VERBAL UPDATE FROM FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING ON DAIRY WAY**

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

The representatives from Freebridge Community Housing provided an update on Diary Way and Wave 3 Funding.

The Chair thanked the representatives from Freebridge Community Housing and invited questions and comments from the Panel, a summary which is set out below.

The Chair, Councillor Devulapalli asked if the land at Dairy Way was to be accessible to the public.

The Head of New Homes and Commercial explained this was Biodiversity Net Gain credit site with neutral grass land with a therefore the intended use was to retain the wet land which would be restrictive to the public, but the consultation would identify different uses.

Councillor Colwell commented this was an exciting project and asked if pre discussion to the consultation were being had with Atkins Realis who are undertaking a flood management assessment in conjunction with King's Lynn Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Colwell offered to liaise with Freebridge Community Housing and these third parties to ensure they are included in the consultation. He added there was a nervousness from residents about protecting the existing wildlife.

Under Standing Order 34 on Zoom, Councillor Bullen commented it was encouraging existing wildlife was protected and the consultation was important for residents to have their input.

The Head of Communications and Marketing confirmed the Norfolk Wildlife Trust had provided an overview of the existing wildlife on the site.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification on the background of the site and if Freebridge Community Housing would be responsible for maintain this site.

The Head of Communications and Marketing explained the site was unused land which was purchased by Freebridge Community Housing for the community and not for future housing developments. She confirmed they would be responsible for maintaining the site.

Councillor Kemp congratulated Freebridge Community Housing on their achievements for improving EPC ratings which contributes to making King's Lynn a Marmot place.

Councillor Colwell sought clarification on the percentage of their Housing Stock with an EPC rating of C.

The Energy and Sustainability Manager confirmed it was estimated 60 to 65% of stock would be EPC C rated by 2028 however this was dependant on other funding received.

In response to a further question from Councillor Colwell, the Energy and Sustainability Manager confirmed they are actively exploring additional funding.

Councillor Kunes echoed the congratulations to Freebridge Community Housing and commented on a resident who had an air source heat pump and solar panels fitted and this has improved their quality of life.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust congratulated Freebridge Community Housing on their achievements and asked how many properties had low EPC ratings. She sought further clarification, if there was any prioritisation for houses with damp and mould issues.

The Energy and Sustainability Manager explained houses with lower EPC ratings were assessed and discussions were being have in terms of profitability and investment of these properties. He added a number of properties had low number of improvements to bring them up to the standard they needed to be therefore funding was being allocated to their properties. He advised the majority of their housing stock was an EPC rating D to A, 15 to 20% were EPC rating E or F along with a couple of properties with an EPC rating of G. He added, in the next two years housing with EPC rating F were to be eliminated. He confirmed, when funding was identified, retrofitting was considered to mitigate damp and mould along with improving the EPC rating.

In response to Councillor Bullen, the Head of Communications and Marketing confirmed Freebridge Community Housing owns 7,500 properties.

EC87: **DOMESTIC ENERGY EFFICIENCY & COST OF LIVING PRESENTATION**

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

The Housing Standards Officer gave a presentation to the Panel.

The Chair thanked the Housing Standards Officer and invited questions and comments from the Panel, a summary which is set out below.

Councillor Heneghan thanked the Housing Standards Officer for the regular updates and recognised the achievements of all the work Housing Standards do. She referred to the schemes which were means tested and commented it was encouraging to see the threshold had been raised and more households are now eligible. She sought clarification on schemes which were not means tested. She asked further if there were ways further advertisement and promotion could be done.

The Housing Standards Officer confirmed there were primary schemes as mentioned however there were additional branch off schemes for households with and EPC rating D to G in Council Tax Bands A to D. He explained these schemes relating to the Great British Insulation Scheme were restructure but with similar criteria. He added further the Housing Standards team work closely with the Communications Team to promote this via social media.

Councillor Kunes commented he had received a grant which was easy to apply for by completing a questionnaire.

The Housing Standards Officer explained big energy companies had an obligation and commitment to pay for energy efficiency improvements in dwellings across the country.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Bullen asked if tenants could contact the Housing Standards directly or if these needed to be done through the Landlord of the property.

The Housing Standards Officer explained tenants of privately rented properties could contact the team and they would then liaise with the landlord however they would recommend with social housing, for tenants to contact their landlords directly.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust took the opportunity to remind members to contact the Lily team to help residents and highlighted the household support fund was still available. She commented the Alive Leisure facilities could be used for Warm Welcome Centres.

Councillor Kemp thanked the Housing Standards team for their work and highlighted the importance of the household support fund and the Warm Welcome Centres.

In response to the Chair, Councillor Devulapalli, the Housing Standards Officer explained the thermal imaging camera in further detail, highlighting the darker the image the more insulation. He added the

public are not able to borrow the thermal imaging camera but advised the team could attend and assess the property for them.

The Chair, Councillor Devulapalli highlighted the Warm Welcome Centres were more focused in King's Lynn and if there were ones being held in other parts of the Borough.

The Housing Standards Officer advised the Warm Welcome Centres were focused more in the town centre as the Borough was rural. He explained Beat the Bills events were arranged with Parish Councils to fulfil rural parts of the Borough.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust explained there were no funding for the Beat the Bills events therefore if there were costs involved, for example the cost of the community centres the events were not able to go ahead.

Councillor Kemp advised Councillor Community Grants could be used to cover these costs.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor de Whalley asked if there would be further demonstrations of the thermal imaging camera at the Beat the Bills events. He thanked the Housing Standards team for their hard work and for proactive joint working.

The Housing Standards Officer brought the Panel's attention to environmental events where the thermal imaging camera would be demonstrated. He highlighted the event on the 2nd May 2025 at the Earth Day Festival at Nelson Academy in Downham Market and the 19th May 2025 at the Community Day Festival in Hunstanton.

EC88: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

The Panel discussed fly tipping, and it was agreed this item would be scheduled for the July meeting.

The Assistant director for Operations and Commercial reminded the Panel there was a form on the website to report fly tipping.

Councillor Bullen provided an update on Florence Fields and the Urban Wildlife Working Group.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC89: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **3rd June 2025 at 4:30pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall.**

The meeting closed at 5.39 pm