

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 OCTOBER 2023

COUNCILLOR MICHAEL de WHALLEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

For the period 16 August 2023 to 10 October 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP)

Following officer and portfolio holder meetings, the partnership has set three priorities as follows:

- Develop a sustainable energy plan to decarbonise energy supply for Norfolk and improve distribution of energy to citizens.
- Reduce and conserve energy demand on the system through retrofitting of buildings through behaviour change, enabling fabric first and heating.
- Enable greener sustainable transport solutions including a focus on behaviour change and using statutory powers where appropriate.

Schools Project

21 schools have signed up with 8 schools confirming that they have started the competition and the remainder have been written to reminding them that the project has begun.

Electric Vehicle Charging

The replacement EV chargers have now been completed in King's Lynn. We are awaiting confirmation that Hunstanton is live.

Re:Fit

The first major retrofit operation enabled a package of energy saving measures, designed to achieve financial payback in under 10 years. These works were funded by the Council with no external grant assistance.

Ameresco were appointed to complete the works, following a mini competition under the Re:Fit framework. The bulk of the works were focussed around the leisure centres and King's Court, with measures including:

LED lighting upgrades;

BMS and plant upgrade/optimisation;

CHP (Combined Heat and Power) units;

solar PV;

building fabric upgrades;

Streetlighting upgrades were originally intended to form part of this first phase, but the works have now been awarded to a separate contractor due to significant cost savings. These are now underway.

Further opportunity to decarbonise our buildings then came via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). BCKLWN were successful in applying for £3.8 million worth of grant funding, under two separate applications, which facilitated upgrades at 11 buildings. The works were again awarded to Ameresco.

The primary focus was on the decarbonisation of heat, with air and ground source heat pumps installed at 9 sites. The funding also supported other measures, with solar PV, fabric upgrades and timerclock (hot water) controls also installed. The primary focus under this phase was decarbonisation.

Initial projections are for an increase in running costs from the PSDS measures. Longer term, however, gas prices are predicted to increase relative to electricity, such that the heat pumps are projected to become cheaper to run than their conventional gas-fired equivalents (i.e. boilers). Practical completion for this second phase of works was agreed in June 22, in line with the funding deadline for completing the works, at which point the systems were observed to be installed and operational. Unfortunately, this meant we had little opportunity to 'stress test' the new systems. Entering into the colder, winter period some sites struggled to maintain temperature and needed to revert to boilers; we are pushing our contractor to resolve these issues and ensure the guaranteed savings are delivered.

More recently, we have also been successful in the application for further PSDS funding. This has supported the installation of a new Air Source Heat Pump system at Enterprise Works, replacing two end of life gas-fired warm air units. This system has been paired with a dedicated distribution system, so integration issues are not anticipated. The building also benefitted from cavity wall insulation. The works are entering their closing stages, with the new system installed and operational and redundant heating having been removed.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Public authorities who operate in England, including councils and local planning authorities, must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' introduced by the Environment Act 2021.

This means that, as a public authority, we must:

- Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on our consideration
- Act to deliver our policies and achieve our objectives

This council, must complete its first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024 and subsequently publish a biodiversity report, no later than 1 January 2026.

Biodiversity Cabinet Task Group

Terms of Reference are currently being drawn up and task group meetings will be arranged shortly afterwards. The group is intended to tackle issues including BNG (as above), the creation of an urban wildlife action plan, habitat protection and creation, the creation of a pollinator action plan and the creation of wildflower verges. A report will be brought to Cabinet via the Environment & Community Panel before consideration at Council.

Council Carbon Footprint

The annual carbon footprint audit, covering financial year 2021/22 is pending 'sign off' from the senior leadership team and will be published imminently. The audit for 2022/23 is being undertaken with some data requests currently outstanding and with the expectation that it will be published in the 1st quarter of 2024.

Net Zero Communities & Fast Followers Projects

Two communities have been identified for the separate projects and are going through final consultation and timetabling processes before they can be named and brought before the E & C Panel.

Beat the Bills Roadshows

The Roadshows offer help on all aspects of cost of living, including information about how to access benefits, grants, discounts and saving money.

Additional dates have been arranged as follows:

Downham Market (Marketplace) – 20/10/2023 09:00-14:00

Hunstanton (Town Hall) – 30/10/2023 09:00-13:00

King's Lynn (The Place) – 31/10/2023 10:00-14:00

Snettisham (Memorial Hall) – 10/11/2023 10:00-12:00

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Community Environmental Groups (Teams)

Regeneration and Development Panel

Audit Committee

Environment and Community Panel

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Briefing

Town Deal Projects Briefing

KLIDB Members Induction

Portfolio Holder Briefings and updates:

Cabinet Briefings

Fast Followers

Air Quality

Community Orchard/Hardings Pits

Norfolk Climate Change Partnership
Wash East Coast Strategy Stakeholders Forum
Climate Change (weekly updates)