

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	4 April 2023		
TITLE:	Norfolk Climate Change Partnership		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Monitoring		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Environment		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Ged Greaves, Corporate Performance Manager Additional consultee - Lorraine Gore, Chief Executive		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
The Climate Change Informal Working Group requested that a report be prepared regarding membership of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP). The report highlights the background to the partnership and the advantages and disadvantages of membership and the potential consequences of withdrawing.
KEY ISSUES:
The report provides an overview of the partnership. Advantages and disadvantages of membership are referred to and the potential consequences of withdrawing.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
Not applicable as this is a monitoring report.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
That BCKLWN continue to remain an active member of the NCCP.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
The report considers the request from the Climate Change Informal Working Group and outlines the benefits and advantages from continued membership of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP) was established on 6 Jan 2020 and reports to the Norfolk Chief Executives and Norfolk Leaders. The aim of the partnership is *“to help develop Norfolk into an exemplar in tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing its natural environment.*

The NCCP will share knowledge and practises, regarding how local authorities can respond to climate change, as well as how the NCCP can influence climate change in Norfolk as a whole.

The NCCP has a shared interest in supporting Norfolk's authorities, communities, public, voluntary and community organisations, businesses and residents to reduce their carbon emissions, realise economic benefits of reducing utilities consumption and adapt to and mitigate against the future impacts of climate change."

- 1.2 The aim alludes to a collective responsibility to tackle climate change. When considering the Notice of Motion (3/21) and declaration of a climate emergency, a key rationale was the need to "magnify the global message of the need for action to local residents, businesses and partners in West Norfolk and signal our strong commitment to help them make positive changes".
- 1.3 The partnership initially included officer representatives from the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, North Norfolk District Council, Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, the Broads Authority, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework Member Forum.
- 1.4 Membership was later expanded to include the Tyndall Centre (University of East Anglia), East of England Local Government Association and the Great South Eastern Net Zero Hub.
- 1.5 A portfolio holders group of elected members was later formed on 28 February 2022 to provide political oversight and direction to the partnership.
- 1.6 The partnership's secretariat role is undertaken by one of the local authority partners and was initially undertaken by BCKLWN before transferring to Breckland DC. Following staffing changes, the secretariat role has temporarily transferred to BCKLWN. Following several offers, a new local authority host will shortly be determined.
- 1.7 The partnership was initially chaired by BCKLWN's Chief Executive but the role is now shared with the Chief Executive for North Norfolk District Council.
- 1.8 Unlike other established partnerships that work across Norfolk such as No Homelessness in Norfolk and the Norfolk Waste Partnership, the NCCP has no dedicated officer resource to support it and to date, it has relied on the good will of partnership members to find capacity to support Partnership activities. It is believed that this is inhibiting impact of the NCCP and its ability to deliver its aims. A recent diagnostic carried out on behalf of the East of England Regional Climate Change Forum found that the Norfolk partnership was significantly less mature and had a greater amount of work to be carried out to achieve its aims than other partnerships across the East of England.
- 1.9 A co-funded partnership management post has been recently agreed at Norfolk Chief Executives. The new post will assist in driving forward activities across Norfolk, assist in sharing notable practice, help reduce duplication, help attract additional external funding to address climate change and help amplify the partnership's communications that encourage Norfolk's residents, businesses and community groups to tackle climate change.
- 1.10 A bid has been made for UK Innovate's Fast Followers fund for a post to support the partnership. External feedback received during dialogue with the funders highlighted the importance and value of collective action in tackling climate change.

2. Partnership overview

- 2.1 An update on the partnership was provided to Corporate Performance Panel in January 2023 and annual updates will be provided in the future.
- 2.2 The update highlighted a number of challenges in the initial years of the partnership broadly summarised as:
- Organisations were focused on Covid-19 response activities from February 2020 until summer 2022.
 - Local authorities had a range of positions in regard to climate change including adopting a climate emergency, specific net zero targets, strategy and action plan development, officer resources addressing climate change.
- 2.3 Meetings were predominantly held virtually until the first face to face meeting post Covid-19 was held in December 2022. This is likely to have constrained development activities due to difficulties in facilitating discussions.
- 2.4 An initial workplan had been developed to guide the partnership's discussions.
- 2.5 The work plan and terms of reference were reviewed in a series of workshops between December 2022 and January 2023.
- 2.6 Three new value-adding priorities for the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership working as a collective are agreed; those being:
- Energy Decarbonisation
 - Transport Decarbonisation
 - Support for the Retrofit of Heating Schemes
- 2.7 An outcome-focused Delivery Plan will be developed for these priorities.
- 2.8 Following this period of review and reflection, the NCCP seeks to refocus its role as a system leader to support sovereign organisations deliver locally by way of the whole of Norfolk's public bodies working collaboratively, or indeed in-part as and when appropriate.
- 2.9 Partner organisations are clear that to deliver results the NCCP needs to be more focused on the key value-added priorities; in particular those issues that have collective benefit for Norfolk as a whole, whilst not duplicating the effort or work carried out by other groups or individual authorities.
- 2.10 A co-funded partnership management post has been recently agreed at Norfolk Chief Executives. The new post will assist in driving forward activities across Norfolk, assist in sharing notable practice, help reduce duplication, help attract additional external funding to address climate change and help amplify the partnership's communications that encourage Norfolk's residents, businesses and community groups to tackle climate change.

3. Issues for the panel to consider

- 3.1 On the 21 February 2023, the Panel's Climate Change Informal Working Group agreed to request that the Panel consider the advantages and disadvantages of being part of the Partnership and consequences of withdrawal.
- 3.2 The Panel may find the following observations of use in considering the Informal Working Group's request.

Advantages

Climate change is too complex for an individual organisation to address. The range of duties, powers, resources and community leadership leverage within a partnership outweigh those of an individual organisation which ultimately impacts upon practical delivery and change at a community level.

Recent agreement by Norfolk Chief Executive's to jointly fund a post will enable NCCP to drive forward climate change initiatives collectively for Norfolk. Insight from the Mayors' Awards, business expo and similar activities across Norfolk indicates the economic impact and business expectations of community leaders. The partnership sends a strong signal on intentions to tackle climate change.

Access to Government grant funding. Some funding streams typically seek evidence of a partnership response. Applications from individual organisations are at risk of being ineligible for not meeting specific funding criteria.

Government grant funding can be competitive. A partnership submission is likely to score higher and carry more weight than that of an individual organisation. Partnership submissions also reduce the potential number of rival bids.

Literature describe partnerships as essential to ensure that climate change targets are met. Whilst countries come together at international COP events, local partnerships help to deliver at community level.

Once the partnership has matured qualities such as information sharing, networking and influencing, problem solving, resource pooling, integrated planning, etc help realise greater value by minimising duplication, abortive work, etc.

Disadvantages

Partners are at different places in respect to their responses to climate change. The pace of local change can be perceived to be hindered by involvement in a partnership. In recognition of a need to "reboot" the partnership, workshops were held over November 2022 and January 2023 to refocus and consider new governance.

Partnership meetings take place monthly and last approximately 1.5 hours. It could be argued that the time and related preparations could be focused on local activities and projects. However, this time could be more than expended on information gathering, bid writing, etc should the council pursue an independent path. This work is a duplication of effort especially on activities that could be undertaken by the partnership manager and the Fast Followers project or where learning could be readily obtained from partners. At a time of scarce financial resources and challenges it would be prudent to combine resources.

Consequences of withdrawal

Withdrawing from a partnership that has been chaired and administered by the BCKLWN risks significant reputational damage and sending mixed signals to the wider community regarding a key local, national and international concern. The council's climate change policy makes reference to acting "*as a community leader to encourage others to tackle climate change*". It also states: "*We will do this by working constructively with partners and stakeholders and by ensuring that in reaching properly balanced decisions, the full range of environmental aspects are considered over the short and long term.*"

Furthermore, withdrawal from the partnership would undermine the basis for declaring a climate emergency on the basis that it dilutes the council's commitment to make positive changes.

The council is a member of a number Norfolk collaborative partnerships including Norfolk Warm Homes, Norfolk Waste Partnership and No Homelessness in Norfolk. Withdrawal may trigger concerns amongst partners and key stakeholders about how committed the council is to collaborative working.

The council would be in direct competition with the remaining Norfolk Climate Change Partnership when seeking competitive grant funding.

BCKLWN is unable to solely address climate change challenges for the borough and would require input from other organisations, including partners of Norfolk Climate Change Partnership. Organisations need to prioritise resources and withdrawal may influence decision making.

All groups, teams, partnerships, etc move through lifecycles often referred to as forming, storming, norming, performing and ending when their purpose is completed or when change is required. The NCCP has recently reviewed its function and priorities and, following that reflection and learning, has a renewed shared focus. Whilst issues are acknowledged, withdrawal at this point may be premature given the partnership is at the point of improving its capacity.

The council's climate change policy states: *"The council will comply with all environmental and climate change legislation and statutory guidance and seek to follow best practice principles to fulfil its statutory environmental and climate change responsibilities."*

Withdrawal from the partnership would contradict specific climate change policy objectives:

6.1.1

Work with Government, the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and partners to contribute to the achievement of the target for carbon dioxide reduction set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Paris Agreement.

Develop plans and support projects with our partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change, according to our local priorities, securing benefit for our communities

Furthermore, the policy states:

10.1. To ensure it is effective, addressing climate change needs to be aligned with corporate aims, objectives and priorities. The council's approach to embedding climate change mitigation and adaptation is to create a culture that spreads best practice, identifies and communicates lessons learnt, and uses appropriate expertise

Withdrawal from a partnership seeking to address climate change may create a culture that hinders the achievement of the council's objectives.

It is the view of the Chief Exec and officers with responsibility for climate change that BCKLWN should continue to remain an active member of NCCP.

4. Corporate priorities

The approved Corporate Business Plan includes the following priority and objective:

Protecting and enhancing the environment including tackling climate change deliver on our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2035, or earlier, by implementing the council's carbon reduction strategy and encourage and collaborate with our partners, communities, and local businesses to reduce their environmental impact.

5. Financial implications

Many external funding programmes can be competitive, withdrawal would place the council in direct competition with the partnership.

6. Any other implications/risks

There is a risk of reputational damage arising from considerations to withdraw from partnership activities that seek to address climate change.

7. Equal opportunity considerations

None.

8. Environmental considerations

The Corporate Business Plan includes a priority of "Protecting and enhancing the environment including tackling climate change".

The Council adopted a change policy, strategy, and action plan in September 2021.

9. Consultation

Management Team, senior officers and portfolio holder.

10. Conclusion

That BCKLWN continue to remain an active member of the NCCP.

11. Background papers

None.