

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 October, 2024 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: S Collop (Chair)
Councillors T Barclay, P Bland, A Bullen, R Colwell, P Devulapalli (Vice-Chair),
D Heneghan, A Kemp, P Kunes, and S Sandell

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor Rust- Portfolio Holder for People and Communities
Councillor de Whalley- Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

Officers Present:

Martin Chisholm- Assistant Director, Operations and Commercial
Kate Blakemore- Chief Executive
Marie Malt- Licensing Service Manager
Stuart Ashworth- Environment and Planning
Jacob Medlock- Housing Standards Officer (Energy Efficiency)
Jo Russell- Care and Repair Service Manager
Mark Whitmore- Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection.

EC35: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hodson and Kirk.

EC36: MINUTES

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RESOLVED: The Minutes from the previous meeting held on the 3rd September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC37: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EC38: URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

EC39: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

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Councillor de Whalley, Rust, Barclay and Sandell were present under Standing Order 34.

EC40: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC41: **CABINET REPORT- GAMBLING ACT- STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

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The Licensing Service Manager presented the report.

She outlined to the Panel the Gambling Act, Statement of Principles was a statutory requirement to be published every three years, in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005. She highlighted to the Committee the policy was drawn up in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Gambling Commission and would come into effect from 31st January 2025.

The Licensing Service Manager highlighted without the Statement of Principles being adopted the Borough Council would not be able to conduct any statutory functions such as issue licenses, permits and enforcements.

She brought to the Panel's attention appendix A which was the list of prescribed consultees and explained the consultation ended on the 16th of September 2024. She advised from the consultation; South Wootton Parish Council had given support to the Statement of Principles.

The Licensing Service Manager highlighted to the Panel the wording changes included in the report.

The Chair thanked the Licensing Service Manager for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Kemp thank the Licensing Service Manager for the report and sought clarification that the Gambling policy was working and protecting the vulnerable both online and in shops.

The Licensing Service Manager clarified the Statement of Principles regulated Gambling Premises and not Gambling online. She confirmed there had been no incidents reported which indicates the policy was effective.

Councillor Devulapalli referred to page 33, the Public Health and Gambling section and asked if there was an input from Public Health.

The Licensing Service Manager confirmed Public Health was on the prescribed list of consultees however there had been no response and therefore no direct input to the Statement of Principles.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendation to Cabinet as set out below:

That the Council be invited to adopt the Statement of Principles in accordance with the requirements of the Gambling Act 2005

EC42: **CABINET REPORT- RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BIODIVERSITY TASK GROUP**

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The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning presented the report.

He provided the background to the Biodiversity Task Group which was created because of the notice of motion in 2020. He added the Task Group had met on 5 occasions and section 2 of the report outlined what was discussed during those meetings.

He added Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) had come into force as part of Planning and advised of the responsibility the Council had as part of the Environment Act 2021. He brought to the Panel's attention as part of the Biodiversity Task Group the idea of a community competition came forward.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning outlined the recommendations to the Panel. He highlighted to the Panel the second recommendation specified the appointment of the Biodiversity Project Officer for a fixed period of two years with funding from the climate change budget. The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained to the Panel the requirement for resource was identified and current officers did not have the capacity to fulfil the Biodiversity Project Officer role.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification that current Officers did not specialise in Biodiversity.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning highlighted the Borough Council had an Ecologist within planning however they did not

have capacity or resource to take on additional work therefore the Biodiversity Project Officer was required.

Councillor Heneghan commented further the Biodiversity Project Officer was an essential role and asked if the Officer would help plan more effectively on where plants and trees were planted.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained the role would include a wide range of responsibilities and could be described as a Ranger who would liaise with the Ecologist and the Public Open Space Team. He added the Officer would also implement the recommendations from the Urban Wildlife Group.

Councillor Kemp commented that promoting wildlife needed to be done as there had been loss of wildlife in previous years. She asked if there was potential for Councillors to go into Schools with a birdbox to educate and encourage children to engage and respect nature. She added was this something which could be done now or would the Biodiversity Project Officer be able to help when appointed.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning referred to 2.3 of the report and the recommendations from the Urban Wildlife which included promoting urban wildlife in wards and parishes. He added if Councillors wished to do this already then-, they could ahead of Biodiversity Project Officer being appointed.

Councillor Bullen commented further that Schools were already engaging and provided an example of Nelson Academy in Downham Market. He acknowledges the good work and enthusiasm which had been carried out by the Open Spaces Team.

Councillor Devulapalli commented she welcomed the role of the Biodiversity Project Officer and sought clarification on how this role would fit in with existing Officers role and asked if the Ecologist and the Biodiversity Project Officer role would liaise together.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning advised the Biodiversity Project Officer would work closely with the Public Open Spaces Team and liaise with the Ecologist.

Councillor Devulapalli suggested the responsibilities of these Officers would need to be clarified to Councillors.

Councillor Colwell refer to page 86, and highlighted the typo and should be A149. He referred to the 2.3 of the report which highlighted encouraging the use of bird boxes and bat boxes and referred to 2.6 of the report which stated engaged with local groups to participate in urban wildlife. He added his support for this and commented the concept was brilliant and hoped it was expanded to other communities' groups.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity thanked the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning for the report and the Officers for working with the Biodiversity Task Group.

Councillor Heneghan asked if private homeowners and other residents would be worked with as well as community groups and educated on what should be planted in their gardens and signified that green space is valuable habitat.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning commented there was lots of information available already, but it could be signposted to residents.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity added residents would be advised through the planning process and the new Biodiversity Project Officer would help educate residents.

Councillor Kunes agreed with Councillor Heneghan's comments and suggested communicating with residents, that having pots and plants in front gardens are ways of encouraging wildlife.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity advised this information would be communicated as part of the communication strategy review to educate residents.

In response to Councillor Devulapalli's question, the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained a policy on requirements for developers which was coming forward as part of the Local Plan which was due to be adopted by the end of March 2025.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below;

1 To accept the recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group as set out in paragraph 2.3, although recommendation 8 requiring a budget for delivery of the proposals would be covered separately through the creation of the two-year fixed-term biodiversity project officer role.

2 To agree to the appointment of a Biodiversity project officer, for a fixed period of two years, with funding coming from the climate change budget.

3 That the council adopts the biodiversity policies and specific objectives set out in appendix 1. 65

4 To agree the creation of a Pollinator Action Plan, on the basis of the draft, with the final wording to be agreed with the Assistant Directors for Environment and Planning and Operations and Commercial, in

consultation with the portfolio holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

5 That the community biodiversity competition initiative, detailed in the report, is supported by the council.

EC43: **DOMESTIC ENERGY EFFICIENCY, PROJECTS AND COST OF LIVING SUPPORT UPDATE**

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The Housing Standards Officer (Energy Efficiency) gave a presentation to the Panel on Domestic Energy Efficiency, Project, and Cost of Living Support.

The Housing Standards Officer advised the Panel of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO 4) which was the fourth stage of the governments Energy Company Obligation scheme which had been extended for an extract four years meaning it would run until March 2026. He advised the ECO 4 scheme fully funds the implementation of wall insulation, loft insulation, lighting and clean heating and focused on low- income and vulnerable households.

He brought to the Panel's attention the Borough Council's Statement of Intent (SOI) which was published on the 27th of February 2023 and this outline four qualification routes for applicants.

The Housing Standards Officer highlighted the significant increase from 8 to 252 declarations of eligibility to households issued within the Borough from the previous round of ECO. He added from the 252 declarations which were issued, 114 households had received a full retrofit.

He explained to the Panel the domestic carbon emission savings and signified King's Lynn and West Norfolk was currently the highest emitter of domestic CO2 across Norfolk.

The Housing Standard Officer explained to the Panel another available scheme which the Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) and this scheme was provided singular retrofit improvements to households within Council Tax Bands A-D that have an EPC between D-G. He added the Statement of Intend for this Scheme was published on 25th September 2023.

Included in the presentation given by the Housing Standards Officer was information about the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 3 and the final reports highlighted the success of the scheme. The Housing Standards Officer explained the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 scheme to the Panel and advised this scheme accommodates full retrofits and would run until March 2025.

The Housing Standards Officer advised the Panel of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) 2.1 which was being implemented by Freebridge Community Housing.

He explained the working relationship with the Integrated Care Board (ICB)- Working Together to data share information on eligible residents. He advised of the project with the College of West Anglia on working together moving forward to address the green skills gap.

He highlighted upcoming projects such as Warm Homes: Local Fund, which was expected to be delivered between 2025-2028. He added another upcoming project was the Social Housing Fund (SHF) 3 which was expected to be delivered from 2025-2027 and would accommodate full house retrofits. He summarised the final upcoming project was ECO 5, which was expected to run until 2030 after ECO 4 concludes in March 2026.

The Housing Standards Officer provided an update to the Panel on the following projects; Beat Your Bills, Cost of Living Working Group, Food For Thought and Lily

The Chair thanked the Housing Standards Officer for the presentation and invited question and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Heneghan commented she was impressed with the work which had been carried out by the Council to help the communities. She asked if the difference in the property archetypes, such as older properties being different to new properties, were considered.

The Housing Standards Officer referred to the ECO and HUG schemes and explained the retrofit assessment determined the suitability and what the properties need. He provided an example, that an air source heat pump would not be installed in a solid brick property in the absence of internal wall insulation. He added the importance of changing the misconception after mistakes having been made with spray insulation and provided assurance.

Councillor Kunes thank the Housing Standards Officer for the report and advised the brilliant work which was being done. He asked if boiler replacement schemes where vouchers were being offered and if this had a impact on schemes being delivered by the Borough Council.

The Housing Standards Officer clarified at the moment in time, it was foreseen for this to not have an impact on the schemes the Borough Council was delivering.

Councillor Colwell echoed the comments made by the other members of the Panel on the work being carried out. He referred to an article recently published about Officers from South Norfolk and Broadland who had been tasked to contact residents entitled to Pension Credit

and commented the concern from people after the removal of the winter fuel payment. He asked if we had any plans like South Norfolk and Broadland to help residents in the Borough.

The Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection confirmed a meeting was to be held surrounding Pension Credits and how we can do more as a Borough to ensure resident entitled are in receipt of Pension Credits.

Councillor Kemp endorsed the comments made and asked if the extent of the issue could be quantified and if we knew how many households needed to be reached. She added the importance of encouraging people to be trained as a green skilled person so work can be done locally.

The Housing Standards Officer advised data was being continuously monitored and were working on way to monitor the number of households that needed a retrofit improvement. He added the home analytical data provided by the energy saving trust was used to distinguish property types, EPC rating, solar suitability, and air source suitability. He referred to the project with the College of West Anglia in relation to trained green skilled persons and would continue to engage to identify the number of people going into this line of work.

Councillor Devulapalli sought clarification on how much households saved on bills and asked if this was highlighted it would capture the attention of residents on how much money could be saved.

The Housing Standards Officer commented he was liaising with Communications and advised the difficulty in residents disclosing the information however it was in encouraged and can then be included in the case studies.

Councillor Devulapalli sought further clarification on the target audience being reached and if this was being measured.

The Housing Standards Officer explained it was being measured on the declarations of eligibility and engaging with communities and households throughout the retrofit stage.

Councillor Rust, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities thanked the Housing Standards Officer for a comprehensive presentation. She added the hard work from Officers highlights the commitment from the Council to reduce carbon emissions and to improve the lives of the residents and support them from the cost-of-living crisis. She referred to the Food for Thought projects, Marmot, Freebridge, Beat your Bills and the engagement with the College of West Anglia. She explained the importance of the ICB data sharing with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to identify eligibility for these schemes available. She added the work being done linked to the Corporate Strategy and the publicly

available information which was a response to a question received at the recent Council meeting.

Councillor Bullen thank the Housing Standards Officer for the presentation and asked if there was an issue with residents not believing or trusting that these schemes could help.

The Housing Standards Officer provided assurance to the Panel in response to Councillor Bullen question and stressed the importance of continuous engagement with residents.

Councillor de Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity echoed the appreciation to the Housing Standards Officer and his knowledge and enthusiasm. He commented carbon reduction was energy and financial savings.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel noted the update.

EC44: **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.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme for 2024/25 was noted.

EC45: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **26th November 2024** at **4:30pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall.**

EC46: **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

EC47: **EXEMPT- CABINET REPORT- DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT FRAMEWORK**

The Care and Repair Service Manager presented the report to the Panel.

The Chair thanked Officers for the Report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Rust, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities commented on the report to the Panel.

The Care and Repair Service Manager answered questions from the Panel.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below;

1. Cabinet approves the signing of the framework agreements with the contractors named in this report, subject to completion of due diligence checks on these businesses.
2. Cabinet approve authority for the Assistant Director Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People & Communities to substitute alternative contractors for any listed that ultimately fail the due diligence checks.

The meeting closed at 5.42 pm