



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 16th December 2021

**JOINT MEETING OF THE ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL,
THE TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL, AND
THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

9th November 2021 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Brookes (in the Chair)

Councillors Aisthorpe, Batson, Brasted, Callison, Cairns, Croft (substitute for Woodward), Dawkins, Furneaux, Harness, Hasthorpe, Hogan, Mickleburgh, Patrick (substitute for Goodwin), Parkinson, Reynolds, Robinson, Sandford, Sheridan, Silvester, Smith, K. Swinburn,

Officers in attendance:

- Carolina Borgstrom (Assistant Director for Environment)
- Zoe Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Eve Richardson-Smith (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Mary Marsh (Commissioning and Strategic Support Unit Specialist)
- Ian King (Spatial Planning Manager, Equans)
- Levi Andersonjordan (Environmental Strategy Officer)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director, Equans)
- Paul Chaplin (Tree Officer, Equans)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor Shreeve (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor Procter (Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Housing and Tourism)
- Councillor Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Councillor Shreeve (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)

There were five members of the public present and no members of the press.

JSPETC.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – That Councillor Brookes be appointed Chair for this joint scrutiny meeting.

COUNCILLOR BROOKES IN THE CHAIR

JSPETC.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Freeston, Goodwin and Woodward.

JSPETC.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Callison declared a personal interest in item JSPETC.4 as a hotel owner in Cleethorpes.

JSPETC.4 CLEETHORPES HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The panel received a report and a presentation to update scrutiny on progress with the new Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan.

Members queried what action was taken to enforce dogs not being allowed on sections of the beach during the designated times of the year. Ms Borgstrom explained that there was active enforcement, with educational advice given out and signage throughout the resort. She confirmed that Natural England requested that the local authority had enforcement as an option within the plan.

Members were concerned about damage caused to the habitat and queried if there was any evidence to show if the damage was accidental or wilful. Ms Borgstrom explained that the active plan was expiring, and the new permission was being sought with Natural England which included how to manage people within the Sites of Special Scientific Interest area, and the Habitat Management Plan would include this. She highlighted that disturbance monitoring was carried out and reported back to officers to act upon.

A member felt that the demarcation line on the salt marsh was unclear and suggested that it be made clearer on site. Mr Borgstrom noted that the increase in visitors to the resort throughout the summer meant that resources were required elsewhere and that there was a delay in taking the encroachment back over the line. She explained that the salt marsh was much greener than previous years which highlighted the encroachment.

Disturbance of the salt marsh due to water sports and use of the slip road into the water was raised as a concern. A member gave an example of the increasing number of paragliders along the beach. Ms Borgstrom was aware of the issue and explained that it was

difficult to enforce because it was difficult to establish where the paragliders came to the resort from in order to then fine them. A member suggested that the local authority enforced water users, so they complied with the code of conduct.

A member was concerned about the delay to the work being carried out on the encroachment of the salt marsh and suggested that Cabinet received a report, including timescales, to be reassured that areas that had overgrown the line in the salt marsh were being cleared. It was further suggested that this report be sent onto to the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel for consideration. Ms Borgstrom clarified that the line was inspected weekly by officers and dedicated staff were tasked to remove it. Some areas were overgrown because of staff being off with COVID but she explained that more staff had been brought in to manage the growth.

Members thought it would be useful for Cabinet to get a feel for how many enforcement incidents (within the list) were report by staff, and members of the public.

Members asked if the habit management plan was imposed and would it have an impact on future events in Cleethorpes. Ms Borgstrom explained that officers had submitted the plan to Natural England who would give feedback before the plan went out for formal consultation. She confirmed that when officers had reached an agreement with Natural England, the plan would go back to Cabinet. The plan was to find the balance so that the resort could thrive whilst not affecting nature.

A member asked if there had been any consideration to leaflets being placed in hotel accommodation about educating visitors on dog walking restrictions on the beaches and the local habitats that could be affected. Ms Borgstrom explained that there was a review of the signage taking place to establish if better educational boards were required along walking routes to inform members of the public about how to protect nature and encourage good eco-tourism.

Members were concerned that the Sea Buckthorn was a litter trap and if the footfall within that area was reduced it could affect local businesses and the resort of Cleethorpes.

The issue of sewerage within the Humber was raised and members queried if Anglian Water were investing further up the river Humber to keep bathing water clean and could Cabinet be reassured of this.

RESOLVED – That the progress with production of the new Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan, and the joint panel's comments, be noted.

JSPETC.5 NATURAL ASSET PLAN

The panel considered a report and presentation that introduced a proposed Natural Assets Plan, action plan and public survey report.

Members requested that the Duke of York Gardens be added as one of the important open spaces to have a management plan.

A member suggested that the Council considered creating apprenticeships to work in the local nature reserves which would create jobs, maintain the nature reserves, and improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.

The natural asset plan was welcomed by members who were concerned about biodiversity and a member questioned if there was a need to call a biodiversity emergency because it came hand in hand with the climate change emergency. Members felt there was work that could be carried out with the public to educate them on the seriousness of climate change. Ms Borgstrom confirmed that officers were working with the portfolio holders on the impact of biodiversity and alongside the carbon road map.

Members highlighted the good work that was already on going within the communities around environmental matters and suggested that the officers engaged with local community groups about environmental matters that affected them. Ms Borgstrom explained that the plan set out the strategic plan and public consultation actions and these were reviewed against the priorities. She confirmed that not everything could be implemented straight away and that it would take time and resources.

Referring to the housing developments in the Local Plan, a member queried if there was a plan for trees to be planted in conjunction with the new developments. Ms Marsh reassured members that there was an elementary plan that was working on identifying, with partners, high quality areas for biodiversity, as part of a local nature recovery strategy. Officers were awaiting draft regulations coming out from central government, which set out the methods for creating and delivering this strategy. Members suggested that officers ask ward councillors to identify any woodland areas and other green spaces that could form part of our nature recovery strategy.

Members queried if there would be clear metrics to see how successful the natural asset plan was, and for it be reported back to the scrutiny panels so they could see how it was working. Ms Borgstrom explained that it was difficult to measure biodiversity and that an annual progress report could look at progress that was linked with some biometrics from a greater regional basis.

Reassurance was sought by members on the impact of planning applications on the environment in terms of biodiversity. Mr King confirmed there was new legislation in terms of the environmental

implications which would affect planning applications. He explained biodiversity mapping had taken place and would be identified in the local plan which developers would have to take into account when designing housing schemes.

A member referred to improving air quality, highlighting that at present there was only one air quality management area and queried if officers were anticipating any more areas to be identified. Ms Borgstrom said she did not anticipate it and that the air quality was generally good across the Borough, and below levels where intervention was needed. She confirmed there would be more monitoring of the traffic pollution in the town centre.

Members were concerned about fires in local woodland particularly where there was lot of dead wood and an increase in reported fires. They queried if this was covered in the plan. Ms Borgstrom explained the purpose of the plan was to raise the profile and routinely update the management plans.

A member suggested that officers asked ward councillors to identify any woodland areas and other green spaces that could form part of our nature recovery.

Members queried if there was conflict between the natural asset plan and the local plan. Mr King confirmed there was a need to protect specific areas of land whilst also providing areas for new developments. He explained it was about how we looked to develop the sites and in a different way whilst protecting habitats and delivering green spaces.

A concern was raised that we should be using more brownfields sites across the borough and reduce the number of greenfield sites for development. Mr King confirmed that there were not enough brownfield sites to meet our needs and it was about where people want to live. If we only identified sites in the urban centre and people could choose to live elsewhere, then we would not get the benefits of people living within the borough and in consequence the town centre and resort would suffer. Members queried if the levelling up fund presented an opportunity to improve matters and use brownfield sites first. Mr King explained that the government were already providing funding to develop brownfield sites and we had to provide housing where people wanted to live.

A member enquired why there was no mention of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) scheme in the plan. Ms Marsh explained that it was referred to in the section of the plan on water management. There was a programme starting to fit SuDS into existing housing areas that were liable to flooding. Work was underway with local residents to explain the benefits and to discuss how these would look and function. Members thought the residents could help with the monitoring. Ms Marsh explained that the consultation could look into this.

Taking into account the feedback from the joint scrutiny panel, it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET -

1. That the joint scrutiny panel's comments be noted.
2. That the North East Lincolnshire Natural Assets Plan, as set out in Appendix A of the report now submitted, be adopted and approved.
3. That the results of the public survey report set out in Appendix B of the report now submitted, be noted.
4. That the Executive Director Environment, Economy and Resources be requested to submit an annual report to Cabinet, setting out the progress towards government targets for biodiversity net gain; improved air and water quality; and increased tree canopy cover.

JSPETC.6 CARBON ROAD MAP

The panel considered a report and presentation that introduced a proposed Carbon Roadmap and action plan (Appendix A) and public survey report (Appendix B).

Members were keen to understand the Council's plans for local electric charging points. Ms Borgstrom explained that a joint survey with North Lincolnshire Council had taken place and a report would go back to Cabinet with the number of charging points and the types of chargers needed for the region. She highlighted that officers were working with local businesses on grant applications and, as a result, they were hoping to have 100 chargers locally quite quickly. Members felt there needed to be a wider strategy, especially to attract visitors with electric vehicles into the Grimsby town centre and Cleethorpes.

With regard to workstream 12 in the carbon map that looked at climate conscious older homes and how the council could support older housing stock to become more sustainable, a Member queried if enough help was being given to these properties. Ms Borgstrom explained that there were grants available for homeowners, however, with landlords it was more of a struggle to update their properties. Members felt there were many houses on the East and West Marshes that would benefit and asked if there was scope for increased selective licensing within that area. Mr Borgstrom confirmed that there was a legal requirement to have an Energy Performance Certificate to sell a house. In areas where properties struggle to sell or haven't sold, officers were looking at the possibility of accessing grant funding.

A member queried how homeowners and landlords could be encouraged to make their houses become more sustainable. Mr King referred to changes to building regulations and national planning policy and there would be more to come in future. He added that homeowners

needed to be made aware of grants available to them and developers should consider the introduction of energy efficient systems when renovating older properties.

The panel felt it was unrealistic for the council to reduce climate change in 10 years and it should say in the report that the 'the world' has 10 years to prevent the worst effects of climate change from becoming irreversible.

Having regard to the public consultation results and the carbon audit completed, the panel unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

1. That the joint panel's comments be noted.
2. That the North East Lincolnshire Council Carbon Roadmap, as set out in Appendix A of the report now submitted, including formal adoption of the target for the organisation to become carbon neutral by 2040, be adopted and approved.
3. That the results of the public survey report set out in Appendix B of the report now submitted, be noted.
4. That the Executive Director Environment, Economy and Resources be requested to submit an annual report to Cabinet, setting out the progress towards the organisations goal to become carbon neutral by 2040 and for the area of North East Lincolnshire to progress towards the government target of net zero by 2050.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.