

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 11 September 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 11 September 2017 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Champion (Chair), Hamitouche (Vice-Chair), Russell, Gallagher, Heather and Jeapes

Councillor Rowena Champion in the Chair

138 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews and Doolan.

139 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

There were no declarations of interest.

141 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2017 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

142 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A5)

None

143 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A6)

The Chair stated that the order of business would be B2, B3, B1 and B4.

The Chair informed the meeting that the site visit to the Bunhill Power Station has now been arranged for 6 October 2017 and that a request for a site visit later in the evening would be considered so as to accommodate councillors unable to attend due to work commitments.

144 2017/18 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT-ENVIRONMENT (Item B1)

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 11 September 2017

Kevin O'Leary, Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration presented the Quarter 1 Performance Report which sets out the corporate performance indicator suite for 2017-18, together with a progress update for indicators relating to Environment over the first quarter of 2017-18.

The following points were made:

- Members were advised that as a result of a technical breakdown with the Contender software, data on waste collection was not available for the committee to consider. However the Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration indicated that the information would be circulated to Members after the technical issues had been resolved.
- In response to a question regarding the health impacts and the group of people that the Council is encouraging into leisure activities, Members were advised by the Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration that a detailed breakdown of the data would be circulated.
- Members were informed that Islington was presently the second lowest amongst the London boroughs in terms of residual (non-recycled) waste per household. Its figure of 381kg was below the NLWA target of 413kg.
- In response to a question on whether advice or information from Council was available in relation to alleviating residents' energy costs, the Executive Member for Economic Development advised that Council was aware of residents experiences with the 6 national energy providers, however it was difficult to convince residents to switch suppliers. Members were reminded that support exists for residents through Council initiatives such as the Warm Home Discount, Debt relief and Energy Doctor and that residents should be referred to the Council's Energy Advice Team for advice.

145 HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING IN ISLINGTON - PRESENTATION (Item B2)

Matthew Homer, Waste and Strategy Manager, was present and made a presentation to the Committee. (Copy interleaved).

During consideration of the presentation the following points were made-

- The Council's Annual Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan was agreed by Executive on 20 September 2016 with the aim of providing quality services that meets the needs of residents and ultimately increases recycling and reduces the amount of waste sent for disposal via landfill or incineration.
- Islington Council has a compulsory recycling policy which applies to all homes and includes all recycling streams where a service is offered such as mixed dry recycling, food and garden waste.
- Committee was advised that the Council's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2016-17 seeks to achieve a recycling rate of 32.5% for waste from households and to support the NLWA recycling target of 50% by 2020
- In response to a question about enforcement, the Waste Strategy Manager advised that although enforcement was more practical with street properties than in Estate

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 11 September 2017

blocks with communal bins, even here recent legislative changes has made it more difficult to enforce.

- North London Waste Authority remains the regional waste disposal authority for Islington and six other north London boroughs. In 2016/17 Islington Council's recycling saved the equivalent of £650,000 in disposal costs as a result of menu pricing.
- NLWA Joint Waste Strategy 2004-2020 was last updated in 2009 and would be updated in the context of the NLHPP and the Mayor's new Environment Strategy
- Members were advised of the Mayor of London's Draft Environment Strategy which aims to make London a 'zero waste city', with no biodegradable or recycling waste being sent to landfill by 2025.
- In response to a question on achieving the Mayor's strategy of increasing the recycling rate up to 50% by 2020 and 60% by 2030, the meeting was informed that the Mayor's focus is to be directed on food waste and single use packaging.
- Members were advised that Islington presently offers a collection of mixed dry recycling to all its residents, a minimum weekly recycling and refuse collections, food and garden waste collections for street properties, communal recycling bins for estates and nightly collections for flats above shops. The meeting was advised of other services such as textile recycling sites, reuse and recycling centre, bulky waste and reuse collections etc.
- Items collected for recycling end up at the Bywaters facility in Bow from which it is sold off to reprocessors either in the United Kingdom, Europe and the Far East and made into new products. With regards to residual waste this ends up at London Waste in Edmonton where it is incinerated and converted for energy use or composting.
- With regards to the rate of recycling, the Waste and Strategy Manager acknowledged that organic recycling was quite low and this was due to issues around food and garden waste, however dry recycling was high compared to neighbouring boroughs. The meeting was advised that considering homes in Islington don't have gardens, the composting rate was quite good.
- Members were advised that as part of the waste prevention plan, the Council in conjunction with NLWA, embarks on outreach activities to promote food waste reduction by engaging in face to face conversations with residents. The NLWA also participates in events such as Annual Waste Prevention Exchange and School Waste Education programme.
- In response to a question about public awareness Members were informed of NLWA's three year 'Save Our Stuff' campaign which is directed at 18-34 year olds, encouraging them to make recycling the right thing to do, with the use of digital advertising and social media.
- The Waste and Strategy Manager advised that although Islington Council had not set aside any budget for communications, it continues to 'piggy back' on the ongoing NLWA communications campaign and promotes its recycling services through various channels, including the Council's website.

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 11 September 2017

- In terms of education and engagement with residents, the meeting was advised that door knocking campaign had always been effective when employed previously however resources were limited. Door knocking is mostly externally funded and mainly directed at residents living in estate blocks and flats.
- The meeting was advised that the need to improve recycling sites, contamination and fly tipping in estates and public sites was challenging. The Waste and Strategy Manager indicated that although work had been done with regards to tackling contamination and fly tipping there was still more work to be done.
- With regards to food waste collection, Members were advised that street properties are provided with individual bins and some Estates have communal bins. Contamination still remains significantly high and difficult to address. Participation among residents in estates was quite low.
- Members were informed that with the introduction of technology on the new fleet of vehicles, issues of overflowing bins especially in estates could be potentially be more effectively reported and resolved with vehicles being despatched to the estates to empty the bins when required. Also as the vehicles measure the weight of the contents of the bins, officers could explore the potential to target estates with low recycling rates.
- Members were advised that local authorities are trying to achieve the same aim, however each has to deal with difficult circumstances and provide a number of different solutions. The meeting was told that some have resorted to fortnightly collections for residual waste and weekly for recycling and in some instances charge for collection of garden waste.
- In response to a question on how to increase Islington's recycling rate from 31% to the Mayoral target of 50%, the Officer advised that addressing issues around the housing estates and also around the private rented sector would raise the present rate of recycling.
- Members were informed that as refuse vehicles returns back to the depot with their load, it may not be allowed to proceed to Bywaters if it is contaminated. Members were advised that in instances where contamination persists officers would visit the premises and engage with the residents on the benefit of recycling and its impact.
- In response to a suggestion on whether the savings realised from waste collection could be diverted towards campaigns and resident engagement, the Waste and Strategy Manager advised disposal costs are charged corporately via a levy from NLWA, that this would have to be a corporate decision and also on whether a business cases could be proposed to justify such decision.
- On concerns about improving recycling in the domestic rented sector, the meeting was informed that Resources London had produced a report called Guide to Waste to Waste Management in the Private Rented Sector with a number of recommendations on developing a relationship between local authorities, landlords and private tenants. Members were advised that officers are currently working through the recommendations with the aim of producing an action plan which will be brought to the Committee in due course.
- The Head of Street Environmental Services acknowledged the good work being undertaken when compared to its neighbouring authorities however for any further

improvement so as to achieve the Mayor of London's target, the Council would need to carry out door knocking campaigns especially in its housing estates and the private rented sector.

- The Chair informed the Committee that as part of the review, Officers on the operational side have been invited to the next meeting in October as it was important for Members to understand and share the daily operations of the team and the various challenges it experiences.
- In response to a question on enforcement especially in light of Islington's compulsory recycling policy, Members were advised that the Council tends to focus more on educational activities and engagement with the residents and that only in exceptional cases such as fly tipping would officers serve a S46 notice and it will be a last resort.
- In response to a suggestion on the possibility of incorporating clauses in relation to recycling in tenancy agreements for private rented landlords, the Waste and Strategy Manager advised that the Council has no control over private landlords and although there is a licence scheme in place for landlords, it is voluntary, with the exception of the HMO Licensing scheme.
- A suggestion on whether caretakers could be utilised more effectively as recycling champions considering their knowledge of their estates and their residents, and also their capability to relate to the BME and residents with disabilities was noted.

146 IMPROVING RECYCLING PERFORMANCE IN ISLINGTON - PRESENTATION (Item B3)

Cathy Cook, Support Manager Resource London, was present and made a presentation to the Committee.

During consideration of the presentation the following points were made-

- The Local Authority Support Manager from Resource London (RL) advised Committee that RL is a jointly funded partnership programme created by the London Waste and Recycling Board(LWARB) and WRAP which ends in March 2020 and it supports London waste authorities, helping them to achieve recycling targets set by the Mayor of London and the national government. Cathy Cook informed the committee that Resource London helps to deliver these targets by undertaking service reviews for local authorities, introducing behavioural changes among residents and promoting innovation and development.
- Cathy Cook highlighted the 4 objectives of Resource London as restricting residual waste, improving the yield and quality of dry recycling, increasing and improving the capture of unavoidable food waste and minimising the amount of waste produced.
- With regards to innovation, the Support Manager explained that as the aim of local authorities is to increase their rate of recycling RL would work in conjunction with councils' to focus on certain aspects such as changing their residual collection regime from weekly to fortnightly; focus on flats by using single transparent bags; reduce the size of the residual bins and containerisation.
- The Support Manager informed Members of recent changes introduced by Camden's Waste Service in April 2017 with the result that the recycling rate had

increased by 11% compared to the previous year.

- Members were advised that Islington and other London boroughs experience similar challenges with regards to increasing their rate of recycling. Islington has a number of unique characteristics such as having 80% of its housing stock being flats, its diverse and cultural mix population, cuts to central government budgets, all resulting in different approaches to how the Council has to address the challenges of increasing rate of recycling.
- Members were advised that with regards to the private rented sector, a guidance booklet had been developed, which will help increase the awareness of recycling however there are concerns where landlords still would not provide facilities for recycling in their premises.
- In response to a question, the Support Manager acknowledged that RL operates on a strategic planning level with waste authorities and have no working relationship with voluntary organisations such as Tenant and Resident Associations.
- Members agreed that the involvement of TRA should be encouraged as TRA's providing solutions on issues such as the siting and design of recycling sites would be regarded as ideas of resident and a feeling of ownership.
- On the issue of increasing community engagement suggestions such as having a league table of recycling rates of housing estates or on a ward by ward basis on the Council website and introducing some financial or community incentives was noted.
- On the issue of overflowing bins especially on estates, the Executive Member for Economic Development acknowledged that some of the council buildings were structurally old and have no recycling facilities, however housing services were in the process of undertaking a structural survey of its bins.
- In response to a question on whether Council would be considering best practices from neighbouring authorities, the Chair informed Committee that Officers from Camden and Hackney have been invited to the Committee, an opportunity for Members to consider their experiences. Members were reminded that authorities vary in terms of types of properties and the population demographics.
- The Support Manager advised that with regards to the future, Islington or any authority intending to meet the Mayor's target would need to employ some radical changes to their services, such as restricting residual waste or by introducing fortnightly collections.

147

DRAFT SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (Item B4)

The Chair invited comments from Members on the draft scrutiny initiation document.

A suggestion to include Tenants, Residents and a Community Development Team Manager as witnesses was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Initiation Document be agreed subject to the inclusion of the above witnesses.

148 **WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18 (Item B5)**

That the work programme be updated prior to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

CHAIR