

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 25 June 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD - Islington Town Hall on 25 June 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Poyser (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair), Champion, Clarke, Convery, Hamitouche, Khurana, Jeapes and Russell

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

286 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**
There were no apologies for absence.

287 **DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**
There were no declarations of substitute members.

288 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**
There were no declarations of interest.

289 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

290 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**

The Chair, Councillor Poyser welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the 2019/20 Municipal year.

The meeting was advised that on Thursday 27 June, a motion is to be proposed by full council declaring environment and climate emergency which will require the Committee to hold a special meeting early in 2020 to debate and formulate policies to address climate changes. The Committee meeting which will be held in public, will be publicly advertised so that interested parties and members of the public can contribute to the issue.

The Chair also took the opportunity to express the Committee's thanks to the out-going Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration, Kevin O'Leary who retires in August after 17 years of illustrious service to the Council.

The Chair thanked Kevin O'Leary for his support not only with his colleagues in his Directorate but to members of the Committee and acknowledged his role with projects such as the Arsenal new Stadium, organising the parades despite being a supporter of a rival neighbouring team, the London in Bloom Winners and importantly with facilitating external contracts such as the waste and ground maintenance which has been brought back in house.

Members of the committee expressed their appreciation for his positive contribution at all

the meetings he had attended over the years and in particular his professionalism, wishing him best of luck with his future endeavours.

291 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

292 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

The Chair informed the meeting that questions from members of the public would be taken in relation to each agenda item.

293 MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DATES OF MEETINGS (Item B1)

In response to Councillor Russell's suggestion of appointing non-voting co-optees to the membership of the committee as terms of reference allows, there was a consensus that considering meetings are held in public, interested parties or groups will always be invited to contribute to the issues or topics on the agenda.

Members welcomed public participation but concerns were raised that considering the broad remit of the Committee which includes economy and transport, this is too wide for a co-optee. Members also indicated that there is public expectation that elected members were capable of developing and implementing policies and decisions.

Councillor Russell proposed a motion to appoint co-optees. A vote was taken and the motion was defeated.

RESOLVED:

That the membership, terms of reference and dates of meetings of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2019/20 be noted.

294 RESIDENT AND VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES -FINAL REPORT (Item B2)

The Committee considered the report on Resident and Volunteer Engagement in Parks and Open Spaces which had been finalised at the meeting in May 2019. The Chair invited comments and amendments

No additional comments and amendments to the report and recommendations were noted.

Councillor Poyser expressed thanks to Councillor Champion, membership of the 2018/19 Committee and officers who had carried out the review on parks and open spaces in Islington.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Resident and Volunteer Engagement in Parks and Open Spaces scrutiny review be agreed.

295 AIR QUALITY - OFFICER UPDATE (Item B3)

Andrew Ford, Environmental Pollution, Policy and Project Manager updated the meeting on issues around Air Quality, its ongoing projects and its challenges.

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In the discussion the following points were made:

- Members were informed that public consultation about the new Air Quality Action Strategy ends on Sunday after which it will be considered and agreed by Executive. An action plan has been developed to implement the strategy.
- Islington has been designated Area Quality Management Area due its levels of Nitrogen Oxide and Particulates and the Council continually seeks measures to improve the air quality in the borough.
- Islington Council recognises the economic benefit to its residents and environment of having good quality air and continually invests with partners and neighbouring authorities on measures to improve air quality.
- Although the main source of pollution in the borough is from vehicles and other forms of combustible transport, other sources include domestic and commercial gas use and industry. It was noted that attempts to address pollution requires not only funding and support from central government but legislative changes and importantly behavioural changes from both producers and consumers.
- Members acknowledged the initiatives which over the years had been introduced to tackle pollution from vehicles such as congestion charges, road safety, traffic management, walking and cycling improvements and improvements to public realm and spaces which has resulted in a significant improvement in the local air quality within the borough.
- Air pollution is not an issue confined to the borough so it is important that Islington continues to lobby the Mayor of London to introduce measures that would involve neighbouring authorities such as the Ultra-Low Emission Zones (which came into effect in April 2019), the introduction of low emission and alternative fuelled taxis and improvements to the junctions at Old Street, Highbury Corner and Archway.
- The Executive Member reminded members that Islington remains the first London authority to introduce diesel surcharges for resident parking and off street meter parking, as the Council recognises the harmful effect on the health and well-being of its residents.
- The meeting was advised that to ensure that all its decisions are transparent, Islington publishes its Annual Status Report, all correspondences with consultees and feedback online. The Executive Member reiterated the challenges of addressing pollution over the years especially from the motoring industry to introduce cleaner technology who have resisted changes for a long time. Members were informed that the motoring industry needs to recognise that it has a significant role to play in addressing pollution.
- In response to a member of the public observation that drivers in front of school gates are ignoring the Council's anti-idling campaign, the meeting was advised that leaflets is readily available, however the Council will continue to monitor breaches and issue penalty charge notices to persistent offenders as it is important to raise the awareness of car pollution and its impact on the health and well-being of residents and school children in particular.

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- In response to a question raised by a member of the public about the integrity of the performance data provided within quarterly reports, the Executive Member advised that recycling data for instance is required by law and verified by government who track it and the other data in the report is information reporting on what the council is doing, ie the number of electric charging units installed.

The Chair thanked Andrew Ford for his contribution, informing the meeting that considering air quality is of interest not only with councillors but Islington residents in general, the Committee would be receiving a further update from the Air quality officer at the February meeting when the issue of climate change is to be discussed.

In addition the meeting was advised that an invitation is to be extended to Dr Ian Mudway of Kings College, an expert on air quality to share his knowledge and experience with the committee early in the new year.

296

2018/19 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT - EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS (Item B4)

Councillor Shaikh, Executive Member, Economic Development presented the Q4 Performance Report.

The following points were made:

- Members were informed that the Council continues to meet its targets on reducing unemployment and supporting people into paid work, however the Service continues to target the long-term unemployed especially among young people and those facing multiple barriers to employment. The Service continues to track parents of 0-18 children, those with disabilities or long term health conditions, young people aged 18-25 and BAME groups.
- Members were reminded about the Council's internal employment service, iWork which has established 'the Islington working employment support hub' at 222 Upper Street in conjunction with staff from a range of partner organisations, which provides a 'one front door' to employment support in Islington.
- The Executive Member acknowledged that due to the lack of accurate statistics of the employment rates amongst 18-25 age group, it has been difficult for the Service to target employment support for this cohort. Members were advised that local authorities do not have a statutory duty for that age group as compared to young people ages 16-17 years old.
- The Council recognises the essence of early intervention in households and families as it is essential to raise aspirations amongst young people in order to avoid future generations of workless households. Supporting unemployed parents into work is key to breaking the cycle of poverty as evidence shows that this is common with parents on out of work benefits.
- The close working relationship with relevant council services such as Bright Start and Early Help has gone a long way in addressing residents with child care issues in addressing barriers to employment for parents with children.
- Meeting was informed that although participation and demand in adult education has seen a drop, Islington ACL continues its marketing campaigns to promote the

curriculum offer in a bid to attract more learners into courses which prepares them for employment. Members were advised that besides lack of skills being a barrier to employment, there is a recognition of other factors such as child care provision and the introduction of universal credit. The council will be looking to promoting or encouraging flexible working amongst employers and the use of community centres and day care places to help alleviate barriers to employment.

- On the question of whether additional support would be required to address the employment challenges experienced by residents with disabilities and long term health conditions, the Executive Member informed the meeting that the Service is aware, however the Council's iWork being able to support 283 residents into employment should be welcomed.
- With regards to the economic inactivity amongst BAME residents, the meeting was informed that the Service has introduced new measure to monitor and target employment support to the group. In addition, the meeting was informed that although employment support is not normally directed at graduates, evidence shows that BAME graduates that live in Islington remain disproportionately unemployed in comparison to their white counterparts. The meeting was informed that the Council is looking at ways of addressing this issue of unemployment.
- On the question of the quality and sustainability of jobs facilitated by the both the Council's internal employment service and external partners, the meeting was advised that presently only jobs internally are tracked, however the Service would be looking in the near future to monitor jobs supported by external partners.
- In terms of revitalising Islington street markets, the Executive Member acknowledged the challenges around street markets and in particular for stall holders, that the council is looking at ways of increasing the footfall by offering initiatives such as discounts to hire market stalls especially for local residents, allow specialist markets in to the market for the odd day and hold community events with the presence of GP clinics and libraries.
- Members were informed of Metropolitan University programme which offers course for teaching assistants, a good route for residents interested in a career in schools.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

297

2018/19 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT - ENVIRONMENT (Item B5)

Councillor Webbe, Executive Member for Environment & Transport presented the Q4 Performance Report which set out the corporate performance indicator suite for 2018/19, together with a progress update for indicators relating to Environment.

The following points were made:

- In response to concerns that electric charging points being used by taxi drivers, the Executive Member for Transport acknowledged that where the Council commissions a company to install charging units, the units are available to be used by all as compared to units provided by the Council. Members were informed that as more taxi cabs are encouraged to switch to cleaner energy it is important that other neighbouring authorities increase their supply of electric charging points.

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- The fall in household recycling rates is due to high contamination levels and the strict tolerance criteria determined by North London Waste Authority, however the Council recognises more needs to be done in terms of public awareness and education especially with regards to nappy disposals and food waste. Members were reminded that despite the cuts to the council and loss of personnel such as recycling ambassadors, Islington has the fifth highest recycling rate of the twelve inner-London Boroughs. In addition, the meeting was informed that residual waste per household remains the second lowest of all 32 London Boroughs which was to be welcomed.
- In response to a suggestion for communal bins on housing estates to be redesigned considering the present ones are not suitable recycling containers, the Executive Member acknowledged that the Service has introduced bins with reversible lids which tends to discourage the use of black bin bags. Members were reminded that the Committee would in the next few months be receiving an update on the 82 recommendations from its review exercise on household recycling.
- On the issue of monitoring of air quality outside schools, a request for data to be included in future performance indicator measures, the Executive Member Transport advised that this would be available on an annually basis especially as the information is collated by the Mayor of London and verified before being presented. Members were assured that this would be available from next year.
- The Executive Members also indicated that information relating to number of trips by buses, cars and cycling in the borough would be available for consideration at future meeting. A request for information relating to the number of people killed or seriously injured on the borough roads each year would also be made available for members to analyse the trends.
- In response to a member's observation of potential trip hazards to pedestrians as a result of car users running cables across pavements to charge vehicles, the Executive Member indicated that the Council expects residents to act responsibly, however any observations should be reported to the council who will take action immediately.
- In response to the fall in the number of leisure visits, Corporate Director Environment and Regeneration acknowledged that the closure of Highbury Pool has been a factor, however following the surveyors report confirming that there was no structural damage to the building from the fire incident, plans are in place to reopen the complex in December 2020 or January 2020.
- A request for details about percentage of appeals won by the council at the Enforcement and Traffic Tribunal was noted by the Executive Member as it will demonstrate the quality and fairness of the Council's parking service.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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SCRUTINY TOPICS AND WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020 (Item B6)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

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The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

CHAIR