

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 16 March 2020

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 16 March 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Poyser (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair), Clarke, Jeapes, Ozedmir and Russell

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

353 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Convery, Graham and Hamitouche.

354 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

355 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

356 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

Councillor Clarke requested that changes be made to page 5 of the minutes, that reference to the expansion of monitoring of air quality outside schools should mention that it includes Nursery Schools.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above correction the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

357 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

Members enquired that in light of the incidence of Covid-19 and its impact regarding future meetings, whether the Democratic Manager liaise with the Chief Executive on the possibility of using social media apps such as Zoom to conduct meetings remotely. In addition a member requested that all council meetings should be live streamed so as to encourage public engagement at meetings.

The Corporate Director advised that future meetings of committees with the exception of Executive, Planning and Licensing meetings will be postponed in line with government guidance on social distancing and pending national legislation regarding meetings.

Committee clerk informed the meeting that consultant witness had indicated of not being able to attend the meeting in light of Covid-19, offering to use Microsoft Teams – a video conferencing tool as an alternative, however unfortunately not possible in this instance as Council could only offer Skype.

With regards the Special meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 9 March, the general consensus of members was that it was a positive and engaging meeting.

The Executive Member acknowledged that although invites had been sent out to various stakeholders, more efforts would be made at future meetings to extend the invitation to other groups such as GP's and TRA's who had been unable to attend. Officers have sufficient time before next meeting to consider other ways of engaging with different groups.

The meeting was advised that at future meetings of these forum meetings officers would provide an update to the public on progress of each on the 6 themes in the strategy and take on further feedback which will help reshape the strategy.

Meeting was informed that letters will be sent out by the Chair to all attendees at the Special meeting on 9 March thanking them for their attendance and contribution on the draft Net Carbon Zero Strategy.

With regards to suggestions and ideas put forward by attendees at the special meeting on 9 March, it was agreed that the type written notes be appended to the minutes of that meeting as a record.

In response to a question on available support to staff of Better Leisure who had been notified of job losses in light of Covid-19, the Corporate Director for Environment and Regeneration acknowledged that presently the Council's focus is to keep its essential services running and supporting and protecting its vulnerable residents.

On the suggestion about possible redeployment of staff to other council services in the interim, the Director advised that all options will be considered, however reminded members that although Council will aim to support staff, it is important to note that Leisure Services is not regarded as critical or a priority services.

358 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

359 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

None

360 BEHAVIOUR CHANGES - INTRODUCTION TO APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE AND ITS IMPACT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - TO FOLLOW (Item B1)

In the absence of David Shannon, Active Travel Manager, the Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration gave a presentation to the Committee regarding Islington's Active Travel Programme. The following issues were highlighted during the discussion:

- Islington's Travel programme has been in practice for quite a while. The programme continues to encourage school children to cycle and walk more to schools and it correlates with Council policy especially around School Streets.
- Members were informed of the range of initiatives such as Bikeability, Cycle skills, STARS, Bike hangers, Dockless cycle hire, School streets, which are all part of the Active Travel Plan, all initiatives aimed at encouraging cycling in the borough which is funded by TfL.
- With regards to concerns about road safety of cyclists, initiatives such as Bikeability and Cycle Skills have resulted in an increase in the number of children and adult being trained. Meeting was informed that in the borough with over £132,000 received from TfL, the council has commissioned independent trainers in within school environments and on public roads to help increase the levels of ability of cyclists. Members were advised that this is an ongoing programme both during school and holiday periods.
- In addition to cycle training, other initiatives offered to cyclist include Dr Bike, which are maintenance classes, which help cyclist acquire the skills of being able to repair their bicycles. Meeting was informed of plans in the future to extend the programme in general to council staff
- With regards to the STAR (School Travel and Road Safety) initiative, a London wide programme funded by TfL, the meeting was advised that schools are invited to participate in a wide range of activities such as walking, cycling, the use of scooters and public transport, smarter driving, curriculum, fund raising and partnership. Schools are then awarded Gold, Silver and Bronze status based on their level of skills and ability. Of the 39 Islington schools enrolled in the STARS programme, 5 have been awarded Gold status, 1 has Silver and 33 are Bronze. The aim of the Council is to support all schools in Islington into achieving Gold status.
- Members were reminded about the benefits of the School Streets initiative which has been in operation for a number of years, as the Council aims to send out a strong message discouraging parents from driving their children to schools. Islington presently has 13 School streets in place with plans to introduce another 17 over the next two years.
- As part of Islington's Travel Active Plan, the Council has a programme of installing bike hangers to encourage cyclists. Plans are in place to install 100 per year in open spaces. In addition the Council in 2019-20 installed 150 new stands for cycle parking as it recognises its importance to its residents.

Cycle stands are installed outside schools and train stations with a view of increasing capacity.

- In response to concerns about the erratic parking of Dockless cycles on pavements, the Executive Member Environment and Regeneration acknowledged that more needs to be done in terms of communication however it is important to recognise that a lot of work has been done by the hire companies in addressing this issue. The Council will continue to raise the awareness of this issue especially with its impact on visually impaired residents.
- With regard to school participation in the STARS programme and possible costs being barriers, the meeting was advised that take up is relatively good as evidence shows that 66 of 79 schools are presently engaged. In terms of barriers, suggestions that affordability be looked in to as this could deter participation was noted. To ensure full participation of the STAR programme and inclusivity, a suggestion on the possibility of purchasing second hand children bicycles was noted .
- In response to a complaint about noise from users of bike hangers which is sited under a resident's window on Bardolf road and plans to install an additional two more cycle hangers in the same location, the Corporate Director requested details be forwarded to the relevant officer. Members were advised that siting of bike hangers in any area follows public consultation with both neighbouring residents and ward councillors.
- With regards to leaves found in bike hangers, the meeting was advised that this should be forwarded to relevant officer or department especially as hangers are normally shut by users.
- In terms of extending STAR into secondary schools, meeting was advised that although infrastructure is in place, it is easier to engage primary schools at this stage especially as secondary schools students enjoy the benefits of free travel on buses and subsidised fares on other means of transport.
- On the question of affordability being a barrier to the take up of the scheme especially among hard to reach groups, it was suggested that maybe these are not aware of cheap second hand bikes and the Council should consider signposting the public to these bikes . A suggestion to fix abandoned children bikes and be made available to the public was noted.
- With regards to nuisance concerns with dockless bikes, the Executive Member acknowledged that although there have been instances of bad behaviour, in general its flexibility of use makes it attractive in comparison to other bike hire schemes such as the TfL bikes.
- Meeting was informed that the Mayor of London had just given the go ahead for the TfL bike scheme to be extended into Islington after many years of

Council requesting for the scheme to be rolled out in the borough.

- On the suggestion that the Council should consider installing more cycle hangers in open spaces on estates rather than on streets , the Corporate Director indicated that presently of sufficient secure facilities on estates.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for his presentation and his input.

361 WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020 (Item B2)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIR