

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 4 February 2021

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at on 4 February 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors: Poyser (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair), Clarke, Convery, Graham, Jeapes, Ozdemir, Woodbyrne and Russell

Also Present: Councillor : Champion

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

420 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence

421 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members

422 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest

423 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

424 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

Regeneration issues/Late circulation of reports

The Chair stated that Councillor Shaikh was unable to attend the meeting that evening and that the discussion of regeneration issues would be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee

Members expressed concern at the late circulation of documentation for the meeting that evening and it was stated that in future documentation would be circulated as far as possible in advance to enable time for Members consideration

Scrutiny Review – Behavioural Change

The Chair stated that the Scrutiny Review on Behavioural Change would be considered at the next Executive and that he would be attending to present the report

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The Chair referred to question submitted in this regard and that a response had been sent to the questioner

425 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business was as per the agenda

426 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions

A Member of the Public outlined the question as follows –

As a member of the St.Mary's/Barnsbury Neighbourhood residents group, which is campaigning hard in relation to the Council's People Friendly Streets policy, we believe that the implementation of all LTN's, and particularly St.Marys/Barnsbury, should be publicised well in advance of the proposed implementation date. This would enable the Group to step up its campaigning activities at the appropriate time. Can the scrutiny committee either tell us now what the planned implementation dates are, or if not direct the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to publish these dates at the earliest possible opportunity, and by no later than the meeting arranged for 30 March

- It was stated that a date was not yet know for the implementation of the Barnsbury/St.Mary's LTN however once these have been formulated they would be notified, and a provisional timetable for LTN's introduction could be circulated

RESOLVED:

That a provisional timetable for the introduction of LTN's be published so that Local Neighbourhoods are aware in advance of when these will be introduced

The Chair thanked the questioner for attending

427 DEPUTATION (Item)

The Chair stated that the Committee had received a Deputation from Ben Griffiths for consideration –copy interleaved

Ben Griffiths outlined the deputation as follows –

We welcome the climate emergency declaration, Vision 2030 and its Action Plans with many commitments tied to specific months, it is a shame that some are opaque and some do not include timelines. We have identified 80 commitments due in 2020/21. This includes 31 which have already passed their due date. For all the commitments which already which have passed their new due date we would like to be able to check whether they have been met, or not met, or partially met, or if we

must, we can note the Council has not provided information about progress on that commitment.

One of those commitments we know hasn't been met. There was no action plan for the circular economy produced in December 2020. I am grateful that when I asked about this two months ago, Keith Townsend, Corporate Director admitted a mistake was made. Also Vision 2030 states that a tree budget would be developed by March 2020 but there is still no tree budget. I have asked Mr Townsend who has admitted a mistake was made. It is not surprising or terrible if a few commitments were mistakes or subsequently slip a little, especially during the COVID outbreak. But it is critical the Council is open and accountable and I am grateful that Mr Townsend has acknowledged that any amendments to commitments should be made in an open and transparent way. On 30 December 2020, I asked him how that openness and transparency will be demonstrated but I have not received a reply. The Council was keen to announce the publication of Vision 2030 but I have not seen any public explanation of the current position on the circular economy action plan or the tree budget

We are calling on the Council to be entirely explicit about progress and to make information easily accessible to the community so we can all work together to tackle the climate emergency

1. The ERSC (Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee) should receive a report at every meeting on progress on all the commitments that are supposed to have been met. This should be in plain English so we can all understand and should provide alternative dates where dates in Vision 30 are not met. Reports should be published before the meetings so Councillors and members of the public can prepare questions
2. The Council website should make sure that a simple to progress on all the commitments that are supposed to be met is displayed whenever people search for Vision 2030. It is not acceptable to display Vision 2030 without acknowledging where the commitments are not being met. That is a recipe for creating frustration and distrust
3. A monthly email update should be prepared giving additional information in plain English about progress on all the commitments that are supposed to have been met. This should go to local climate change groups like ICAP, inspiring Sustainable Islington, FFI, XRI, and to all other individuals and organisations who request it
4. Update reports along these lines should be prepared for all meetings of the overarching environmental alliance group of interested parties which the Council has agreed to support
5. It would be really good if enquiries and correspondence on this topic are dealt with in the spirit of recognising the climate and ecological emergencies

The Vision 2030 commitments should not be treated as just another Council work stream but as demonstrated, a commitment to tackle the dire threats to work

- Committee noted that a written response had been sent to the presenter of the petition by the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Mr. Townsend

- In response, the Corporate Director acknowledged the error in relation to the circular economy action plan, reminding the meeting that the Net Zero Carbon strategy 2030 was endorsed in November with a view of it becoming policy in December. Work is taking place to turn the strategy into an active process. The Director noted that it is a significant aspect of work and consideration would be given as to how progress can be reported going forward
- A Member referred to the response to the deputation, noting that Council officers were working extremely well given the difficult circumstances of COVID, however it was important going forward to ensure that progress was documented in a transparent manner and this could be shared with the Scrutiny Committee. It was stated that consideration would be given to the process of reporting progress
- Reference was made to the need to lobby Government and the GLA with regard to additional funding, and it was stated that London Councils were working together at both officer and political level and a recognition that Islington is leading on Green Energy
- The Committee noted the Climate Emergency special meeting of the Committee scheduled to take place on 30 March

The Chair thanked Ben Griffiths for attending and presenting the deputation

428

SCRUTINY REVIEW - PRESENTATIONS NET ZERO CARBON EMISSION - THEMES - PLANNING FOR ZERO CARBON (Item B1)

Sakiba Gurda, Head of Planning Policy and Karen Sullivan, Service Director Planning and Development were present and made a presentation to the Committee, (copy interleaved) during which the following main points were made –

- Planning plays an important role in ensuring that developments minimise their contributions towards climate change as well as adapt to and be more resilient to its impacts. Islington has implemented ambitious and robust planning policies over recent years to minimise the contribution of development to climate change
- Current local plan – Developments required to minimise their carbon emissions on site, including through energy efficiency. One of the first Councils to require carbon offset payments, as part of net zero carbon approach which is then used to fund projects that reduce carbon emissions. Planning policies to promote and develop decentralised energy networks. One of the first to implement a car free policy for all new developments
- New Local Plan – approach to net zero emissions - commits the Council to ensuring all buildings in Islington will be net Zero Carbon by 2050, consistent with the London Plan. The Council has declared a climate and environment emergency and will strive to achieve net carbon zero by 2030, ahead of the 2050 target. Planning policy plays a critically important role as part of moving towards net zero carbon emissions from buildings in the borough. Planning is however only part of meeting the net zero carbon target. The Council's planning policies can only reduce carbon emissions through the design and construction of new and refurbished buildings that require planning

permission. The ambitious planning policies in the Local Plan must be accompanied by a range of other interventions, as set out in the Council's net zero carbon strategy

- Trajectory to net zero – achieving net zero carbon from all buildings in Islington will require significant retrofitting of existing building stock to ensure that it meets the highest possible energy efficiency standards. Decarbonisation of the electricity grid and a move away from gas boilers is also required. This is outside the current scope of the planning system and would require significant changes to national policy and legislation
- All developments of 1 unit or more must be zero carbon, ensure development proposals reduce energy demand through energy efficiency, reducing emissions through low carbon energy sources and renewables, approach requires compliance with Fabric Energy Efficiency statement. Major development proposals should calculate and demonstrate actions to reduce whole life-cycle carbon emissions
- New Local Plan Energy infrastructure – selection of heat sources in line with the policy will ensure developments prioritise low and zero carbon heating options, major developments required to have communal low temperature heating system, heat sources for communal systems selected in accordance with heating hierarchy, and connection to heat networks prioritised. The new local plan and the zero carbon and energy policies are supported by other policies which are important in building climate resilience. These include policies on thermal comfort, integrated approach to water management, requirement for site specific flood risk assessments, continue commitment to reducing car use and promoting walking and cycling
- There is a commitment to delivering a net zero carbon supplementary planning document in the Local Plan and Zero Carbon strategy. This will assist with the implementation of policy and provided practical guidance
- Planning reform – currently undergoing an unprecedented period of planning reform, significant increase in permitted development rights mean planning permission is not required and planning policies cannot be applied. Further significant permitted development rights proposed and this will erode the ability to achieve net zero and further increase costs of retrofit. Due to the deregulation of planning controls the Government will place greater reliance on building control to secure energy efficiency measures
- Reference was made to the need to inform residents of proposals and it was stated that a presentation to residents could take place in the future
- Noted that Government were being lobbied in relation to the proposals in relation to permitted development rights proposals, and the proposals around commercial to residential and how the Council could influence this
- A Member stated that he welcomed the new SDP and that consideration should be given to looking at the current policy in conservation areas and historic buildings, and how this could be tailored to better meet net Zero carbon aims. It was noted that this is an area currently under consideration
- Reference was made to carbon offsetting and it was stated that developers did generally try to comply however in certain developments it was not always possible, and therefore a financial contribution is made

The Chair thanked Sakiba Gurda and Karen Sullivan for attending

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SCRUTINY REVIEW - SUSTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY WORKSTREAM (Item)

Frances Ugboma, Head of Energy Services and Keith Townsend Director of Environment and Regeneration were present and outlined the presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved

During consideration of the presentation the following main points were made –

- Scrutiny Work Programme - February 2021 – Planning priorities and sustainable and affordable energy, March 2021 Green Economy (provisional) and Transport, Sustainable and affordable energy generation and supply priorities, April 2021 Residential buildings, commercial and industrial buildings and infrastructure and the natural environment and waste reduction and recycling priorities
- Strategy at a glance – residential buildings, commercial and industrial buildings and infrastructure – improve energy efficiency and reduce the level of carbon emissions of all buildings. Transport – reduce emissions in the borough from transport, Sustainable energy and affordable energy and supply – increase local generation of renewable heat and electricity, increase the update of affordable and renewable energy tariffs and mitigate fuel poverty. Green Economy and Planning – deliver on net zero carbon target whilst assuring the economic success and vitality of the borough by working closely with the 18800 businesses in the borough, many small or micro sized. Natural Environment and Waste Reduction and Recycling – integrate ongoing activities in recycling and reducing waste and managing the local environment
- Additional workstreams –engaging, empowering and partnership, finance and investment
- Sustainable and affordable energy – scope – clean energy with a particular focus on waste heat and solar, all buildings in Islington residential and commercial, and all residents of Islington with a particular focus on fuel poverty. This workstream will enable zero carbon and low cost heating supply and electricity generation for as many residential and commercial buildings as possible
- Deliverables – Energy networks – complete the Green SCIES design project, develop other smart energy networks, add new connections to the Bunhill heat network and seek ways to connect with other networks, look at how the Bunhill Heat Network can be made a zero emissions network, connect our communally heated buildings to district heating networks where possible. Maximise solar power generation, purchase any remaining electricity needs for renewable sources, support residents in fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency and maximising incomes of Islington residents in or at risk of fuel poverty
- Number of funding applications to support Sustainable and Affordable Energy
- Delivery over the next 12/18 months – develop and agree funding delivery route for the Green SCIES project, switch the Council and partners to electricity supplies generated through renewable sources of energy, identify

options to secure more cost effective and energy efficient solutions for residents, develop scope and action plan of the Renewable Power for London workstream, as part of the London Climate Change Programme

- Reference was made to the need to ensure local contractors were upskilled in order to bid for retrofitting works. It was noted that the level of certification required by the Government for retrofitting made it difficult for small contractors, however work would be taking place to ensure local contractors are more equipped in this regard
- A Member stated that it was more expensive for residents if they had to change to green tariffs and that many residents would not be able to afford this
- In response to a question as to solar panels it was stated that there were problems with installing these on historic buildings, such as the Town Hall, however ways of retrofitting and reducing carbon emissions were being looked at. It was stated that the Emirates Stadium would be a good example of where solar panels could be installed

The Chair thanked Frances Ugboma and Keith Townsend for attending

430 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021 (Item B2)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and a report on the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods be included on the agenda at a future meeting of the Committee

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

CHAIR