

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 17 March 2021

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Special Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 17 March 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Poyser (Chair), Clarke, Convery, Graham, Jeapes and Russell

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

443 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Khondoker.

444 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

445 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

446 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 4)

None

447 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 5)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

448 TACKLING THE ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE EMERGENCY (Item B1)

The Chair invited both the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Champion and The Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration to address the meeting and give a presentation, a copy of which is interleaved. The following main points were made:

- Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration acknowledged the challenges and opportunities in the last year, reiterating the Council's commitment in building a greener, healthier and fairer borough for all its residents
- It was noted that the pandemic has further exposed deep and entrenched inequalities which underlines the need for urgent action to address inequality and health inequality in Islington.
- Despite an almost unprecedented global economic slowdown, last year has witnessed the second hottest year on record, further underlining the urgent

need to take action to combat global warming and climate change.

- Executive Member acknowledged that prior to national lockdown in March 2020, the Council was engaging with local people and organisations on its draft Vision 2030: Building a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030 Strategy, however this has now been agreed alongside the Council's new Transport Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan in November 2020.
- A new delivery team has been created within a new Climate Change and Transport Service.
- The Executive Member noted that 2021 has not just been about adopting the Strategy and preparing Action Plan, the Council has made significant strides in terms of delivering its 2030 Vision by continuing to deliver initiatives such as School streets, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and Cycle lanes etc. In addition, Council has commenced work on its ambitious programme to improve the energy efficiency of council homes and buildings; ensuring electric vehicles make up 10% of the council fleet and developing ambitious and robust planning policies to ensure the highest possible environmental standards for all new buildings in Islington.
- Executive Member acknowledged that in delivering its Action Plan, the Council will be investing £48 million over the next three years.
- The Corporate Director reiterated that carbon emissions for Islington as a borough is presently 679,589 tonnes, representing a reduction of 42% since 2015.
- The Council has categorised its proposed commitments and actions as to what the Council can commit to immediately and actions to take; what the Council see as potential commitments but will require further investigation before committing to and what the Council will need from others so as to be able to achieve its net zero target, including funding, powers and legislation.
- It was noted that this period is an opportunity to deliver a transformative reduction in carbon emission in the borough and this can be achieved through collaboration with residents, local communities and borough and regional partners.
- Meeting was advised that the programme has eight delivery work streams and the Council has invested additional resources to make it happen. The Corporate Director reiterated the importance of the Council developing a governance arrangements for councillor scrutiny and engagement, borough partnerships and engagements and regional and national working.
- The Council continues to build on existing partnerships across the borough including working closer with the Fairer Together Partnership and Islington

Sustainable Energy Partnership.

- The meeting was informed that the Council to develop London wide partnerships working with London Councils and the GLA. Islington is the lead authority for renewable energy on the London Council's climate change programme.
- The Corporate Director reiterated the Council's commitment with the Net Zero Carbon Programme by investing in its delivery as the Council has a dedicated programme team to enable and help drive delivery.
- With regards to buildings and energy infrastructure, the Council is developing pilot projects to install energy efficiency measures across selected housing estates and installing solar panels and LED lighting on its housing estates.
- The Corporate Director also noted that in terms of transport the Council continues to replace its vehicle fleet with electric vehicles; install cycle parking and cycle hangers to provide secure cycle storages. Efforts are being made to install electric charging points to facilitate the switch to electric vehicles.

The Chair thanked both Cllr Champion and Keith Townsend for their updates.

The Chair invited members of the public to participate in the 2 rounds of the 5 themed workshops after which facilitators of the workshops will report back to the meeting.

Members of the public in their discussions of the 5 themes of the Net Zero Carbon Programme, made the following comments and suggestions which are listed below:

Buildings, Housing and Infrastructure

- Major employers particularly in the south of the borough with large buildings should be invited to lead on this issue.
- Residents were concerned about the Council's inability in retrofitting its housing stock.
- Need to improve its communication with residents so that there is an increase in enthusiasm for low carbon interventions.
- The Council should endeavour to involve businesses as Partners especially in the area of money and funding in other to further the agenda.
- It was noted that considering half of the borough is within conservation areas, has planning any role especially with regards to the various green initiatives like solar panels.
- There is enthusiasm for the Bunhill Distribution Network and that the Council should consider further ground breaking technology initiatives.

Transport

- Discussions centred around the Local plan, parking of large vehicles, electric vehicles.
- The Council to increase further collaboration with Partners such as TFL and Central Government on this issue is essential
- People friendly streets were discussed and its relevance, noting that it's aim is not to displace traffic into other neighbouring streets.
- Meeting was informed that the Transport Strategy and Net Zero Carbon Strategy complement one another, having been agreed by the Executive at the same time.
- Issues around equalities and fairness was discussed in particular its impact with the proposed transport changes.

Sustainable & Affordable Energy

- Council should promote local businesses doing good things especially in terms of environmental issues
- The use of newsletters and posters to disseminate information effectively. Also to employ the services of Council's ambassador/champions in getting the message out. Suggestions such as social media, placing leaflets on windows were mooted.
- Council should consider ways to encourage private renters about green initiatives and in particular private landlords to make improvements to their properties such as switching to green energy. A suggestion on offering green mortgages and some form of funding was mooted.

Natural Environment, Waste Reduction & Recycling

- The Council needs to introduce more hard hitting communications with residents regularly about the council's target, to actively involved on the various green initiatives.
- Need for more green spaces and discussion on how to develop a vision for reclaiming road spaces that are released after road closures.
- It was agreed that focus should centre on reducing waste rather than recycling rates.
- Council to continue to lobby government to change legislation that will make things easier.
- In terms of behaviour changes especially with young people, it was suggested that giving young people opportunities to engage in green initiatives with a view that such messages will be taken home and influence parents to change behaviour.
- More efforts is required to incentivise local businesses with reducing both waste and plastics

Green Economy & Planning

- Local Planning Authority needs to be more proactive, for example discussions on what should or not be allowed especially with developments in

Conservation areas that it should be very clear to all parties. Officers indicated that the Supplementary Planning Document would be the tool to clarify it better.

- Council to continue working closely with both small and big businesses in the borough. It was suggested that where small businesses lack knowledge and expertise with adapting or introducing new initiatives support would be required and in the case of large businesses involved or engaged in green initiatives, the Council should tap into their expertise and knowledge.
- The Lead officer indicated the possibility at the next forum meeting to provide case studies of companies on their efforts with addressing issues such as waste collection, heating and lighting.
- The Chair thanked all the members of the community for coming to the meeting, and again thanked officers for coming to the meeting and engaging with the Islington Community about their work.

449 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)

In response to concerns and the possibility of the Council's being able to meet its 2030 target, it was suggested by the Executive Member that it is imperative that communication with residents will need to be improved.

With regards to Council's commitment on planting trees, the meeting was advised that the current canopy (target) is presently 27% but the Council has a target of 30% which is a significant shift.

In terms of the huge investment required by both the private and public sector in order to fulfil most of the green initiatives highlighted in the Strategy, the meeting was advised that the Council in conjunction with other authorities via the London Climate Change Programme is working on an investment strategy which will be presented to central government.

A suggestion to involve schools and colleges as they have a vital role to play was noted, that curriculums should reflect the Council's target.

In response to a question about TMO's, TRA's and Co-op's and its involvement with green initiative, meeting was advised that the Council recognises the need to work with them and will include them with the Council's plans

On whether support is available to home owners or if they would be able to access or benefit from some of the green initiatives, meeting was advised that the council will continue to lobby government to be more flexible in this area especially as different criteria exists for different applications.

On the question of involvement with voluntary organisations, the meeting was advised that the Council has carried out some work with ISEP previously but it will be considering their involvement as the programme goes forward.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

CHAIR