

London Borough of Islington

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 1 February 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Town Hall on 1 February 2022 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Clarke (Chair), Heather (Vice-Chair), Gilgunn, Jeapes, Khondoker, Russell and Weekes

Councillor Tricia Clarke in the Chair

- 521 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**
Apologies were received from Councillors Champion and Shaikh.
- 522 **DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**
None
- 523 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**
Councillor Khondoker declared an interest in B3
- 524 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**
Cllr Heather asked if the member questions posed to Martin Capstick of North London Waste Authority via email after the last committee meeting could be chased. RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.
- 525 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)**
The Chair reported that the three Informal Working Group meetings have now been completed, on waste, recycling and food waste. A report will be presented to members on the 7 March 2022 committee meeting. Member feedback will also be sought for a report on the Net Zero Carbon Programme at the meeting. Action Officers would provide the reports of their meetings with Dr Rembrandt Koppelaar and Dr Christian Reynolds to the committee. The special Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny will be happening on the 14 March 2022. This will be open to the public and will be held online via Zoom. The council will be recognising National Apprenticeship Week on 7-13 February 2022.
- 526 **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)**
The order of business would be B3, B1, B2, B4, B5.
- 527 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**
To Be Taken With B1
- 528 **SCRUTINY REVIEW: NET ZERO CARBON PROGRAMME – FINANCE AND INVESTMENT (Item 8)**

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Owen Darracott, Finance Manager was present, together with Keith Townsend, Corporate Director Environment and Regeneration for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved. The following points were highlighted:

The Challenge

- Islington declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted 'Vision 2030' Strategy in 2020.
- The strategy is split into six main priorities – Buildings; Transport; Sustainable + Affordable Energy; Green Economy; Natural Environment + Waste and Planning (Workstreams 1 to 6).
- Underpinning all of these priorities is Engagement & Comms. and Finance & Investment and the role of this workstream is to collaborate with the six main priorities to achieve NZC.
- The workstream also has its own 'deliverables' defined within the strategy. Our

Objectives

Our Finance & Investment Plan has the following priorities:

- A) Produce programme business case and support project business cases as needed
- B) Ensure project business cases considered in Medium Term Financial Strategy
- C) Consider the most cost effective way for financing 'Vision 2030' Strategy
- D) Reduce the carbon emissions from the wider aspects of Islington's investments
- E) Ensure financial reporting and benefit realisation tracking is in place and effective

Produce programme business case (capital)

The latest proposed NZC Capital Programme was considered by Executive on 13 January: Highlights include:

- Continued investment in People Friendly Streets (£7.596m) and School Streets (£1.200m).
- Ongoing programmes of fleet electrification (£5.969m) and fleet infrastructure (£3.149m).
- Installing LED lighting + solar panels on public buildings (£2.000m).
- Additional investment in retrofitting and GreenSCIES (£24.058m).

Ensure project business cases considered in MTFS

On 13 January Executive was presented with six new business cases. Subject to approval this represents £24.058m of additional investment

Financing 'Vision 2030' – Islington Greener Futures 2027

- The Islington CMI launched on the final day of the 'Islington Together' Festival, 29 October.
- Executive Members selected six key projects on the Council's approved Capital Programme.
- The interest rate is 1.55% and the 'all in' (including fees) cost of debt is 1.64% so the CMI was a cheaper form of borrowing when compared to the Public Works Loan Board.
- As the first ISA, media interest has been wide ranging (eg: Bloomberg, FT, The Times) and interest rates compare favourably to the new NS&I 'Green Bonds' (0.65%).

In 2022 and beyond Islington can (and will):

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- Support new investment 22/23-24/25 and build on successes of existing projects (eg: PFS).
- Pursue funding opportunities (eg: Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund).
- Explore alternative forms of finance, including Joint Ventures and ESCOs (eg: GreenSCIES).
- Develop a financial strategy focused on financial and environmental benefits.
- Continue to collaborate with London Boroughs and its partners across the capital.
- Lobby government for more action on climate change.

Reduce carbon emissions from Islington investments

- The workstream contributes directly to a reduction in carbon emissions through pension fund (reduce current/future exposure to carbon intensive assets/companies by 50%/75% v. 2016).
- The pension fund is committed to investing at least 15% in green opportunities including but not limited to climate change mitigation; low carbon tech and sustainable infrastructure.
- The pension fund also monitors 'ESG' risks (Environmental, Social, Governance) annually and sets targets to mitigate risks and the Council monitors the ESG ratings of fund managers.

By 31 March 2021 the pension fund had decarbonised by 33%.

The Chair thanked the presenters for the presentation and welcomed members to raise issues and ask questions.

On Investment and social justice, a package of programs was selected, including schools streets. All of the projects were previously approved by executive members, and there was a range of investors locally on each of the projects. The council will be doing regular updates with investors on these projects. The engagement locally has been really good and has helped the council develop relationships up and down the country.

On Insulation and social housing, the council commissioned UCL to give an overview on the total investment to retrofit our estates. There will be a breakdown on types of properties, over the next 12 months to find the affordability of doing these works and marrying up the current area of work, into a more tangible program. The council has selected certain estates for a pilot program of retrofitting housing stock. Action- Officers to find what funding Peabody will be providing for these works.

The Chair invited members of the public to ask questions.

Dave Twine asked about the governance around the council's Net Zero Carbon Strategy on the issue of Carbon Emissions, and if the council has set the right budget for Net Zero Carbon 2030. Officers answered that the governance arrangements were in place, and the reporting comes through the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. There was confidence in the budget that it is the most well-funded and ambitious carbon budget across the capital. The council is leading the way in fleet electrification, but retrofitting housing is still a big challenge. While the budget is set at Full Council, there is always space for innovation from ideas generated from residents.

Helena Farstad asked about decarbonising all council work streams, and offsetting the carbon residue at the end. Officers answered the work done with CICC has sourced that it will cost over £1b, with the majority of the cost being from retrofitting. Officers will provide further in writing.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted

APPRENTICESHIPS (Item 9)

Julie Foy, Director, Human Resources was present, together with Caroline Wilson Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved. The following points were highlighted:

The Council has been working with local partners and employers over many years to create and increase take up of apprenticeships for Islington residents as a means to build skills to enter and progress in work. Similarly, as an employer, we have prioritised apprenticeships within the Council, to provide opportunities for local unemployed residents to gain skills for work, develop existing staff in their careers, and address skills gaps.

Over the past five years, we've undertaken a range of work to continuously improve our offer, maximise the value of apprenticeships and increase take up. This includes:

Targeting residents who are under-represented in employment and priority sectors: including implementing a guaranteed interview process for Islington care leavers, and targeted activities to raise the profile of apprenticeships with residents, parents/carers, school aged children, NEET young people and those at risk of becoming NEET, as well as providing external pastoral support to local apprentices e.g. those placed on building sites.

Increasing the range and breadth of apprenticeships: promoting apprenticeships within the council and partners ranging from Level 2 (GCSE) to Level 7 (Masters), and engaging with partners and supply chains to promote apprenticeships, particularly in key growth sectors, broaden progression routes and address skills gaps.

Improving the council recruitment process: For apprenticeship opportunities only, the council has created a bespoke question-based application form to direct candidates to the information required from them. We have also introduced the use of multiactivity assessment days, helping applicants to better demonstrate their talents and potential in a variety of ways and increasing manager confidence in recruitment decisions.

Promoting take up within the Council and schools: launching an in-house programme for council staff to upskill through apprenticeships, supporting schools within scope of the levy to recruit apprentices and upskill their existing employees, and creating cohorts of apprentice teachers.

Ensuring a focus on quality and sustainability: ongoing coaching and support for apprentices placed externally, bespoke support for council apprentices through personal development opportunities and mentoring, and training for council managers to support them to successfully manage an apprentice.

Using our Apprenticeship Levy to support other organisations: To date we have committed £382,007 to 10 different Islington based organisations supporting the training of 31 people.

Work is underway to develop a new Apprenticeship Strategy 2022-26 which will set out a vision to create a borough-wide apprenticeship programme, which increases the number, quality and accessibility of apprenticeships, and ensures that we reach those residents who most need support, and targets those sectors where opportunities are growing. As an emerging approach, there are five draft objectives which will contribute towards delivering the vision:

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Objective 1: work with local partners, businesses, schools and within the council to ensure that apprenticeship opportunities created in the borough offer a high quality experience.

Objective 2: engage more employers and internal departments in creating more opportunities and designing them to address their business needs and local skills gaps.

Objective 3: Develop a strong communications strategy to promote the value of undertaking an apprenticeship, both as a pathway into work, but also as a way to progress on to higher skills

Objective 4: Ensure equitable access to apprenticeships for all Islington residents

Objective 5: Act as a leader and influencer through innovation in apprenticeships, testing new approaches and sharing best practice.

To deliver the step-change required, the Strategy will need to be driven by a detailed action plan, with a range of targets. The primary targets are anticipated to be:

Create 1,000 new apprenticeship opportunities over 4 years • With 65% of apprentices progressing into further employment on completion of their apprenticeship, and • Increase spend on our Apprenticeship Levy from 60% to 70%. A detailed 4-year action plan will be developed, in order to build momentum and the capacity required to deliver against these ambitious targets. In addition, this will obviously require adequate resources to meet this ambition and officers continue to work on identifying internal and external funding for the programme, as well as opportunities to work with partners including anchor institutions. The Draft Apprenticeships Strategy 2022-26 will be developed in the coming months. The Chair thanked Julie Foy and Caroline Wilson for the presentation and welcomed members to raise issues and ask questions. On School workforce and apprenticeships, the council will be using Section 106 funding to support apprenticeships in schools. Schools outside of the local authority control will be included in the new strategy. Working closely with schools will help them incorporate apprenticeships into their own workforce strategy. There will be an improved communication strategy to help with this. On onsite contractors, the council has found pastoral support so important to developing relationships onsite with contractors, to ensure quality apprenticeships are being delivered. Apprenticeship arrangements are being put into Section 106 agreements to ensure they are delivered at the centre of council schemes. On targeting underrepresented residents, recruitment support comes from the council iWork team, which has done a lot of work into helping residents build their confidence in terms of applying for opportunities that they may not have previously considered. Targets will be put in place in the new strategy to ensure that diversity is a big factor going forward, including those with disabilities, mental health and those with caring responsibilities. On setting targets around those not in education, employment or training, working closely with the youth unemployment team to ensure young people are getting the support they need and they are aware of the opportunities open to them. But members should input into the strategy on how to engage more with the community on these areas.

On Sector Skill Academies, a network of training providers is being set up to teach green skills across the borough. Including City and Islington College and Euston Academy have both recently secured funding for green skills in construction. The Lift Program with both Camden and Tower Hamlets Council, will be delivering tech based skills training. The Chair reminded Officers to ensure the Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030 section is to be filled out appropriately.

RESOLVED:

That the previous progress on apprenticeships was noted, as was the future strategic framework.

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AIR QUALITY (Item 10)

Lucy Facer, Helena Farstad and Rachael Swynnerton, Islington Clean Air Parents gave a presentation on Air Quality, highlighting the action that needs to be taken within Islington as 72 people died from air pollution in Islington within the last year.

The Chair thanked Lucy Facer, Helena Farstad and Rachael Swynnerton for the presentation and welcomed members to raise issues and ask questions.

On the work of Islington Clean Air Parents in Schools, while the school catchments areas in Islington are small, parents are still driving children to school. But school traffic is smaller than overall larger commuter traffic. But if Parents want to make a simple change, they could start walking the last 10 minutes of the trip to school. The council can work with Islington Clean Air Parents on getting the message into schools and with parents.

On WHO Targets, the council should start to integrate into existing council policies. However, a willingness to really engage with the targets, with residents and stakeholders to see meaningful change with the WHO Targets.

On commercial cooking, it would be helpful if stricter licensing was in place to ensure that we do not have so many businesses cooking in the same area. A serious reduction in coal cooking commercially would go a long way to help air quality.

On the top 3 priorities the council could adopt:

1. Resident awareness on Air Quality.
2. Reduction on car parking
3. Engaging children in schools and in the community to see what kind of city they want to grow up in.

Andrew Ford, Environment Pollution Policy & Project Manager was present, together with Keith Townsend, Corporate Director Environment and Regeneration for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved. The following points were highlighted:

Over the past few years pollution in the borough has been going down. Whilst the borough more or less meets the legal requirements for air pollution it does not meet the new WHO recommended Air Quality Guideline levels published in September 2021. In particular NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} will be hard to meet as they are close to or in some cases below the background levels of these pollutants. PM_{2.5} in particular has a large contingent of trans-boundary pollution from northern Europe.

Highlighted current projects and actions

- **School air filtration study:** working with Imperial College London we trialed two air quality filtration systems, as well as different monitoring sensors, at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School. Results are currently being written up.
- **GP project:** this Defra funded scheme running to the end of 2022 is train in Islington GPs to give advice on air quality as well as creating wider communication material linked to the GP interactions. This is the first scheme of its kind in the UK and will be used to feed into national learning. Training has been delayed by Covid and is due to start in February.
- **Monitoring:** we retain our two main continuous monitors and have increased our diffusion tube monitoring and now have over 300 monitors outside every school nursery and care home in the borough, as well as for a range of other projects and

statutory monitoring duties. We also have a number of sensors that we are trialing and are looking into possibilities of more widespread sensor use.

- **New air quality strategy:** we have a statutory duty to create a new air quality action plan every five years. Our current air quality strategy runs until 2023 so we will soon start the process of creating a new strategy for consultation later in the year.
- **Canals:** all eco mooring zones are now up and running, providing electricity for boaters to run their boat. A ranger has been employed to work with boaters and residents to help with queries and compliance, surveys of use are being conducted and a study monitoring impacts of solid fuel burning inside boats has been completed and is being written up.
- **Anti-idling:** we continue to take part in the Anti-idling London scheme, funded until end March 2022. In 2021 this included an engines off campaign throughout November and we are offering schools anti-idling workshops for children as part of wider school events. We continue to respond to complaints about idling and run events, however these have been reduced recently due to Covid.
- **Construction NRMM:** working with councils across London to regulate vehicles and equipment on construction sites.

Wider Schemes:

- Chapel Market Good Growth Fund
- City Fringe ZEN

ULEZ

On 25 October 2021, the Mayor of London expanded the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) up to, but not including, the North and South Circular roads. This means that the area expanded from just covering Bunhill and Clerkenwell wards to covering the whole borough.

Key findings from the first month of operation of the expanded ULEZ are:

- Following the introduction of the ULEZ 92% of vehicles detected in the zone meet the strict emissions standards, up from 39% in 2017.
- Compliance was also up from 87% in the two weeks before the scheme was launched.
- There are 47,000 fewer non-compliant vehicles detected in the expanded zone compared to the two weeks before the scheme was introduced.
- 11,000 fewer vehicles driving each day in the zone. This is a 1% reduction.
- £61 million was made available in scrappage schemes to help low income and disabled Londoners as well as charities and small businesses to prepare for the ULEZ. This equates to removing over 13,500 older, more polluting vehicles from London's roads.

Whilst these are ULEZ wide figures, there is no reason that they would not apply to Islington.

The Chair thanked Andrew Ford for the presentation and welcomed members to raise issues and ask questions.

On the GP project and driving less, being physically active is always better. Exercise is always better than the effects of pollution, while in a car. At no point does the pollution get so bad that exercise would be discouraged. Cars pass on pollution from one car to another while in traffic.

On NRMM and construction, all Construction Management Plans come via the council. However, exemptions do happen from the GLA. The council should be able to have a bigger say on this, as officers can find out, a while later that construction equipment is being used that the Council did not agree to.

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On Commercial Cooking, this should be extracted and filtered to ensure that the fine particulates are not going into the air. Licensing could be stronger on this, ensuring that businesses are doing more to ensure the air quality around commercial cooking.

On Sprinklers, all sites need to operate the best practical means of use of sprinklers to prevent dust and it will be different from site to site.

On road transport, work has been done, particularly with bus companies to work on air pollution around idling. Officers will be working with the Net Zero Carbon team here at the council on this. The transport strategy has a series of commitments to reducing traffic use and air quality.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted

531 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS INFORMAL WORKING GROUP MEETING AND MEMBER REVIEW (Item 11)

The Chair noted the minutes of the previous informal working group. The Chair informed the committee that a third of all food does not reach the human stomach, which was discussed at the informal working group.

532 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022 (Item 12)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted

The meeting ended at 21:45

CHAIR