

London Borough of Islington

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 4 July 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at on 4 July 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: Clarke (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), Craig, Gilgunn, Hayes, Zammit and Russell

Present: Other Councillors: Bell-Bradford, Khondoker, Champion

Councillor Tricia Clarke in the Chair

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Angelo Weekes

6 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None.

8 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

9 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair gave thanks to the previous Corporate Director of Environment and Climate Change for the work they had done with the committee over that last few years. The Chair noted the success of the public special meeting that took place in April. The Chair informed the committee she would be attending the next London Scrutiny Network event where they had selected the theme of 'Climate Emergency – local authority approaches to scrutiny in this area'; the Chair would report back any key points from this event.

10 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The Order of business was as per the Agenda.

11 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

Public questions were taken after each agenda item.

12 **MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE 2023-24 (Item 8)**

The Chair presented this report on the committee membership and terms of reference.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted by the committee

13 **SELECTION OF SCRUTINY TOPIC 2023-24 (Item 9)**

The Chair presented this item and asked Councillors for suggestions on the Scrutiny Topic for 2023/24.

Councillors made suggestions for the scrutiny topic, including:

- Active travel, promotion and behavioural change
- Inclusive economy, affordable workspaces, and apprenticeship schemes
- Delivery riders and drivers and their impact

Councillors made suggestions for one off reports and informal working group topics, including:

- Water harvesting
- Green skills within the inclusive economy
- The Supplementary Planning Document
- Library of Things and the Bright Sparks schemes
- Recycling Rates

RESOLVED:

That the scrutiny topic for 2023/24 would be Active Travel

14 **LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE - Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 10)**

The Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion and the Assistant Director of Community Learning & Libraries presented this item. The Executive Member asked for questions or comments on the report.

Key points raised in the discussion were:

- Councillors noted the use of libraries as warm spaces was a positive move.
- The Executive Member explained they were looking to engage certain communities through targeted activities and better relationships with schools as well as looking at how to measure demographics and the types of people that used the libraries.
- In response to questions on the decline of use of PCs in libraries, the Executive Member explained that while there was a digital divide, officers had set up a working group to look at this in 3 different strands: connectivity, devices and skills. There were also PCs for beginners at different libraries across the borough. On site visits the PCs had always seemed to be in good use, but the team were always reviewing the need for these and how they were being used. The Executive Member explained being digitally inclusive was very important and asked councillors to flag any issues they may see or hear about from residents.

The Executive Member said they would investigate the data on use of PCs and the active members of libraries.

- The Executive Member explained there was a review of library spaces and community centres. It was part of the strategic approach to investigate the existing relationship between the two but there were some collaborations between the spaces rather than being always two separate entities.

ACTION

The executive member to investigate the data on use of PCs and active members of library spaces.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted by the committee

15

EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS - Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 11)

The Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs and the Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs presented this item. The Executive Member explained that there had been a 300% increase to the people in work from the 2019 target of 1,000. They had worked hard to revive the Anchor Institutions. There had been projects such as LIFT to get people from minority backgrounds into the creative and tech industry, £1.49 million funding had been secured to run a similar programme on life sciences. The Council have been campaigning hard to ensure local institutions provide the London Living Wage. The 5,000-person target of people into employment over 4 years was already at 3,000 in the first year, but the Executive Member explained that keeping people in those roles was just as important as initially getting them into work. Most outcomes and statistics were from the external employers and as these weren't statutory it could be difficult to get statistics on certain groups in employment such as parents and people with disabilities. The Executive Member explained the childcare bursary was being maintained.

Key points raised in the discussion were:

- The Executive Member explained that the childcare bursary could conflict with maternity leave. There were still improvements to be made to the scheme, but the Executive Member emphasised that the money was available to support parents into work. Outreach workers had been hired to work with parents and publicise the bursary. The Executive Member explained they would be interested to know if the bursary isn't reaching particular groups, and they were regularly updating Islington partners so will hopefully see greater take-up next year.
- The Executive Member explained that officers would investigate the gaps in data around disability benefits and the data about people still in work.
- On affordable workspaces, the Executive Member explained Outlandish did an amazing amount of work and were a long-established provider. They had delivered great social value and worked closely on the Net Zero Carbon aim. The Executive Member explained the Council had a mature strong relationship with Outlandish and wanted to reach this same level with all providers.
- The support for young people into paid employment had been under target and Councillors asked whether they received other forms of support such as for mental health or debt. The Executive Member explained some

of the cohorts were looked after children so work closely with Children's Services and receive pastoral support. There was a knock-on effect from Covid-19 meaning social interaction had decreased and social isolation had increased. There also was resistance from employers to employ the 18-25 category, as many don't run apprenticeship schemes. However, the Executive Member wanted to do more internally and work with schools in offering apprenticeship schemes. The Executive Member explained they were developing a strategic approach to make Islington an exemplar employer for apprenticeships.

- A councillor noted it was great that Islington worked with people and schemes around women in construction.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted by the committee

16

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT - Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 12)

The Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport presented this item. The Executive Member explained that increasing recycling rates was a persistent issue and there had been a reduction since covid. There was an ongoing piece of work on this. Waste reduction and work on how to improve recycling on estates was also being looked at. There had been 419 EV Charging Points installed as of May 2023.

Key points raised in the discussion were:

- The Executive Member explained that the Street Scene Strategy Manager would update the committee in 6 months on waste reduction and recycling on estates.
- The communications programme for recycling was behind schedule, but the Council was trying to engage with people in a more exciting way and it was important to involve residents in the process and ask what they want to see.
- Councillors noted that the Cost of Living had an impact as this had changed people's spending habits and could mean they were buying more plastic packaged goods.
- It was important to continue to encourage people and give better guidance so that they were more equipped to recycle and reduce waste. It was important to also notify people of positive changes and outcomes such as the target around residual waste to further encourage them that they were making a difference.
- A member commented that it was positive that the number of people with privately owned cars was reducing.
- The NLWA tried to keep recycling as local as possible.
- It was noted it could be difficult to keep track on whether the reduction of food waste was good or bad as it could also mean that people are consuming and wasting less food. Messages that tended to work revolved around the cost of wasted food.
- The Committee also wanted to explore what happened to wasted clothing.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted by the committee

17 **NET ZERO CARBON PROGRAMME - Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 13)**

Sarah Hitchcock, Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme, presented this report.

Key points raised in the discussion were:

- The Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme explained that some Action Plans were taking longer than planned as a holistic approach was needed and currently the data is not available for some areas. Hopefully by the end of the year these plans will be available to the Committee.
- They further explained they would come back to the Committee on the timings for the circular economy Action Plan and the opening of the green classroom.
- It was important to be able to justify why projects were happening such as Library of Things and Bright Sparks. Councillors requested another update on these and how the work was progressing.
- The Islington Living Streets AGM took place on 5th July 2023. It was important to have ongoing engagement between cyclists and pedestrians. This discussion could be integrated into the citizen panel discussions.
- Islington had been Highly Commended in the MJ Awards for its work on People Friendly Streets.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted by the committee

18 **PROPOSED WORK PLAN 2023-24 (Item 14)**

The Chair presented the draft Work Programme 2023/24 to the committee and highlighted the suggestions that Councillors had made for witness evidence sessions and one-off reports.

It was noted that the work programme would continue to be updated throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That the workplan 2023/24 be noted.

The meeting ended at 9:30pm

CHAIR