

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 7 October 2019

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 7 October 2019 at 7.30 pm.

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

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

310 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Champion and Hamitouche.

311 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

312 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

Councillors Convery declared a personal interest in relation to Angelic Energy as he is presently an existing customer. Councillor Khondoker declared a personal interest as she is presently employed as an Air Quality Policy Officer when the issue of air quality monitoring around schools was discussed.

313 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

Matters arising:

An omission was noted in the minutes. A member of the enquired about the Council hosting events regarding the Heathrow Runway expansion plan at the Islington Business Design Centre and the Town hall especially as this is contrary to the recent council motion on climate emergency.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings subject to including the omission noted above and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

314 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair noted that on Friday 27 September, school children in Islington had participated in a public protest about climate change which was addressed by Jeremy Corbyn MP, Councillor Watts, the Leader of Islington Council and Councillor Webbe, the Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

The Chair mentioned that he would be meeting representatives of Living Streets in the next week.

In response to a question on whether the Transport Strategy would be considered by the Committee before its adoption, the Chair requested the clerk of the committee to liaise with officers.

315 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

316 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

In response to a suggestion that Council reconsider its policy encouraging residents to switch their energy suppliers especially in light of the recent news about the financial difficulties being experienced by Robin Hood Energy, partners of Islington's Angelic Energy, the Executive Member for Environment reiterated that irrespective of the ongoing issue with Robin Energy, the Council will keep highlighting the advantages of switching to other energy suppliers away from the 'Big six energy companies.

317 SCRUTINY REVIEW - PRESENTATION (BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES) - TO FOLLOW (Item B1)

The Committee received a presentation on Behavioural Science from Professor Ivo Vlaev of Warwick University and Amy Jones of Ernst Young LLP. A copy of both presentations are interleaved with the agenda.

- Human behaviour greatly affects wealth, the environment and society and importantly in light of the current climate of financial insecurity, this adds another layer of complexity and challenge. In addition, the meeting was advised that unhealthy behaviours like smoking, obesity and healthcare associated infections are related to the choices people make.
- A realisation of the need to influence behaviour change in all aspects of society has resulted in institutions and government applying behavioural insights to public policy around the world.
- The art of influencing behaviour is nothing new and has been around for quite a while, for example coercion, however what is new in recent years has been identifying how best to do it. Recent research in behavioural science indicates that approaches based on information and education do not actually work that well, but people are influenced in remarkably similar ways by the framing of a decision and by subtle contextual factors which are fast, automatic and largely unconscious.
- Professor Vlaev informed the meeting that applying behavioural science has resulted in improving health outcomes in that, there has been a dramatic fall in levels of smoking across adults in the UK, although not in the case of the poorest members of the society. Members were advised that the behaviour changes of smokers was primarily due to a combination of factors such as

price rises, social marketing campaigns and public smoking bans

- Members were informed that although straightforward incentives in influencing behaviour has its appeal amongst policy makers, these approaches are grounded in a neoclassical perspective which states that preferences are rational and reflective, with a bold assumption that self-interested individuals always make rational decisions.
- Behavioural economics challenges the assumption that people are rational and utilizes a theoretical approach rooted in sound evidence based- theory. This theory involves understanding behaviour change and any intervention design should be informed by recent comprehensive models of behaviour and behaviour change.
- According to recent and integrative frameworks for understanding behaviour and designing behaviour change , human behaviour is an interacting system in which capabilities, opportunities and motivations interact to generate behaviour therefore produce behavioural capability which in turn influences these components.
- The three conditions necessary and sufficient for the performance of a specified behaviour are the skills necessary to perform the behaviour, an intention to perform the behaviour and no environmental constraints that make it impossible to perform the behaviour.
- With regard to capability, the issues to consider are the level of knowledge, awareness and mental stamina to engage in understanding and reasoning. The question here is whether people will be able to understand, will they find it difficult and is there a role for tools to assist in understanding and reasoning.
- In terms of opportunity, Members were informed of the importance of having environmental infrastructure and technology in place to support and sustain the behaviour. Meeting was informed that there is clear evidence which confirms how people are affected by their environment.
- Members were informed that studies have shown that motivation plays a key factor in people's behaviour, of which 80% is reflective, which is uncontrolled, emotional, effortless, fast and unconscious and the remaining 20%, automatic which is controlled, rule based, slow, rational and conscious.
- Professor Vlaev informed the meeting that models on behavioural insights have shown that when human beings receive information, it automatically triggers a habit which leads to a decision, however when the information is novel, then decisions tend to be reflective and conscious. Human behaviour tend to avoid losses and acquire gains in their decision making process.

- Nudge theory or economics challenges the previous theory and practices of addressing human behaviour. It recognises first that the environment has a big impact and questions what can be done about human irrationality. Nudge economics recognises that instead of telling people what to do, go with human nature.
- Professor Vlaev highlighted two cases when nudge theory had been applied and had resulted in an improvement in better outcomes. The drawing of a fly on men's urinal at Amsterdam Airport had resulted in a significant decline in spillages on the toilet floor and importantly cleaning cost. Another example shared with members was the decision by the highway authorities in Lake Shore, Chicago to paint narrow white lines on the road in an area notably for high levels of accidents. The decision to paint lines resulted in drivers unconsciously slowing down as they approached the hotspot and a fall in car accidents.
- Nudge means pushing people gently, not shoving or forcing them or persuading them into new and better behaviours which would be cost effective. Professor Vlaev, shared the 9 practical tools - MINDSCAPE, an acronym which means, Messenger, Incentives, Norms, Defaults, Saliency, Priming, Affect, Commitment and Ego. Tools essential for Nudge theory to be successful in influencing behaviour change.
- Professor Vlaev reiterated the importance of the message that is to will impact behaviour change, the need for it to be timely and importantly who delivers the message as people tend to respond to someone who is recognisable, hence the role of celebrities. Also social norms is relevant, for example sharing what others are doing goes a long way in changing behaviour, this is notable with messages left in hotels regarding using less towels reminding hotel guests of environmental issues, such messages resonates with people. Also offering options will not result in any significant change in behaviour but employing default techniques has seen changes in behaviours, for example instead of offering resident's options of grey or green energy, default to the latter and everyone will take up that option. Employing this default technique has resulted in an uptake in pensions schemes and organ donations, where enrolment becomes automatic and opting out will require a concerted effort.
- Members were advised that making things accessible will result in an uptake of service or activity as evidence demonstrates that the introduction of cycle paths and running paths had led to a significant increase in cyclists and runners without any form of persuasion. Also salient messages regarding household electrical appliances and its energy use, savings on electrical bills is well received. In terms of discouraging short journey driving mentioning the amount of levels of Co2 emissions does not work but stating the cost to car budget, using computerised data, people take notice.

- Another success highlighted as a result of employing 'nudge theory' was the painting of baby faces on shop shutters which has detracted perpetrators. Evidence indicates that such an image speaks to people's innate caring nature as no one wants to deface baby images. Experimental trials with baby faces introduced in Camden and Croydon has resulted in a 50% reduction in antisocial behaviour.
- Amy Jones of LLP shared her experience with the Committee, having set up Croydon's Behavioural Science Unit, the first in local government across the country. It's mission was to discover the root causes of problems in service delivery, design solutions with people in mind, and making the delivery of the Service easier. Members were reminded that whatever initiative designed is evidence based and trialled.
- Amy Jones informed members that in over 2 years 80 projects had been delivered by the Behavioural Unit (BU) and about 150 members of staff had been upskilled with lots of benefits and returns on investment.
- Members heard evidence of the approach employed by the Behavioural unit with the sole aim of improving the delivery of Croydon council services. The approach would require a mapping exercise for users, speaking with stakeholders as they are aware of the various challenges, identifying biases, bottlenecks and opportunities and targeting behaviours. The end result is to design something that addresses those behaviours and make it easier. This will have to be tested, after which, if necessary amend and make some improvements. The final stage will be to implement and roll it out.
- Other instances where behavioural insights approach had been employed by the Unit was in addressing the failure of the Council complying with the statutory deadline of 21 days with the Children Looked After. There was a high number of DNA appointments (Do not Attend), where young people failed to attend their appointments which was costing the NHS £160 a day. The unit decided to make subtle changes to the invitation letter, inserting a map within the letter and the time of appointment and a tear off slip reminder. This subtle change resulted in a 50% drop in DNA appointments.
- Members were advised that although the essence of most interventions is in principle to make things easier, there are instances where the intervention is to make things harder such as introducing wall climbers to prevent the painting of graffiti on walls.
- Following the Grenfell Fire Incident, the unit helped redesign the messaging around hazardous materials being left in communal area of tower blocks. Attention was also directed at in particular the notices, placing them in visible areas. In addition the unit recognised the difficulty with hard to reach groups and BAME residents regarding the fire safety literature and signs especially with residents that English is not necessarily their first language, so a decision was taken by the unit to improve the design graphics which then

spelt out the message better.

- Amy Jones also shared with the meeting the involvement of the unit in improving the late applications with regards to the Council's secondary school admission, which has resulted in a 33% decrease in late applications. In addition members were advised of the benefit in monitoring the number of hits on the council website as it provides the Council the appropriate time and opportunity to engage with residents in a more effective way.
- The Committee heard evidence of how the BU addressed issues of under occupation using behavioural insights. In this instance, the unit recognised immediately that the one size fit approach which was previously employed was not applicable. The unit in particular focussed on a particular group called the 'Silent generation'. This required a mapping exercise to understand their journey and the entry point into under occupation. From this mapping exercise, the BU was able to identify their exact needs. Amy Jones reiterated the 3 essentials for behaviour change, capability, opportunity and motivation, noting that in the case of the silent generation, previously the focus had been primarily on motivation and just addressing their present needs and not their future needs, so the Unit came up with a checklist to be used by staff and then plotted it with different messages to identify which was effective. In this case the unit agreed that the most effective message was deadlines resulted in behaviour changes.
- In response to a question on how to address recycling of food waste on housing estates, members were advised of the importance of intelligence gathering, after which biases, bottlenecks and opportunities will need to be considered. Any solution designed to address behaviours will have to be evidence based, piloted and then rolled out.
- Members were advised that any initiative addressing behaviour change would require political buy in and leadership. In addition, before tackling behaviour among its residents, staff behaviours would need to be addressed.
- Members were reminded that besides employing nudge techniques to influence behaviour change, some forms of enforcement and incentives may still be required. In response to a question on how to ascertain what works, Amy Jones noted that to determine what work best, initiatives need time to be tested.
- In response to complaints about inadequate recycling facilities for food waste, the meeting was advised of an unpublished research which suggests that replacing large containers with smaller bins especially as there is a stigma attached to larger bins in communal area, that these smaller bins would go a long way in increasing recycling rates, however there is a cost implication with this option especially as the support and assistance of the managing agency will be required to ensure its effectiveness.

- With regards to concerns about the confusing messages to residents in different authorities regarding items to be recycled, it was noted that issues around capability, knowledge, skills and motivation would need to be thoroughly considered. Education is key, however any campaign to address behaviour change should be timely.
- In response to a question on how to monitor the effectiveness of any initiative to address behaviour change, the meeting was advised that having in place an Internal Hub within the Council will be in a position to analyse, engage trials and introduce flexibility.
- Amy informed the meeting that presenting the LGA has a behavioural insights funding program for behavioural science projects, but this deadline has now ceased until the next round of funding in November 2020.

The Chair thanked both Professor Vlaev and Amy Jones for their presentations.

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2018/19 (Item B2)

The Committee received a presentation on the 2018/19 Annual Report from the Executive Member for Economic Development. A copy of the presentation would be interleaved with the agenda.

In the discussion, the following points were made.

- The Council's Inclusive Economy programme follows on from Islington's Fairness Commission which is based on a community wealth building approach and its focus on equality, social justice and prosperity for all. The meeting was advised that the Strategy is being drafted and will be shared with Members in early 2020.
- 1,352 Islington residents had been supported back into paid employment across the various groups. The Council continues to encourage local businesses to be responsible by taking on apprentices especially among local residents. Meeting was informed that through its 'Team Islington' approach it has been able to coordinate employment support which benefits the long term unemployed and those most in need.
- The Council through its planning policy has been able to create a network of affordable works spaces for micro and small businesses such as tech and digital companies.
- Members were informed that in March 2019, Employment month was celebrated at the Emirates Stadium to acknowledge the progress of this issue ever since the Employment Commission report was published.
- Islington continues to commission affordable work space through developer's s106 contributions. In Finsbury Park, an operator has recently been appointed with agreed targets to help local residents develop skills, get jobs and start businesses in tech.
- Members were informed that the Service continues to work in collaboration with traders to develop a high quality marketing campaign for Fonthill

Village, for example producing a Look Book, which enables local businesses an opportunity to show case their businesses.

- The Council as an economic agent is developing an enhanced approach which ensures that it derives more 'social value' from contracts with third party suppliers and providing more opportunities to local small businesses. On Council's plans to maximise social value, the meeting was advised that in the last 2 months, the Service has facilitated three workshops with Head of Services to co-produce a corporate social value strategy and a series of 'asks' related to council priorities which commissioners can use to secure social value. The Executive Member welcomed the visit from her counterparts from Manchester City Council who shared their pioneering work on social value in a most effective way.
- The Council remains committed to meeting its commitment to provide 100 hours world of work for young people. The Executive Members acknowledged that although there is a recognition that career support is inadequate there are plans to scale up business engagement with schools in order to prepare young people for future careers. A key programme is to be launched in November at the Institute of Physics to raise the profile of this manifesto commitment.
- Usama Mohammed, an Apprentice Site Manager with Osbourne Group recently won the Apprentice of the year (Supply Chain) award. The Executive Member acknowledged the efforts of iWork and the Jubba Youth and Community Association and in particular welcomed the shift in the mind set of certain community groups that apprenticeship is a viable alternative than the pursuit of academic qualifications.
- With regards to supporting town centres and traditional street markets, a study had been commissioned to better understand its survival and it being able to thrive in the context of new challenges. This study will be shared with members when the exercise is completed.
- Suggestions of opportunities for the reskilling and retraining of apprentices in retrofitting homes was noted especially in light of the Council's goal to achieve a zero carbon circular economy. Also it was noted that there is scope for the use of affordable work spaces for repairs and reuse centres.
- With regards to accessibility concerns around High streets experienced by people with restricted mobility, and mobility scooters and wheel chair users, the Executive Member noted that work was being done and that work by Council's accessibility officers are focussed around Stroud Green Road and Blackstone Road. Members were advised that Islington in conjunction with Haringey and Hackney are carrying out a review on this issue, which will be shared with members when completed.
- In response to a request for more detail on Council's plan to retain the money in Islington similar to the Preston Model, the Executive Member acknowledged the impact of high business rates, welcoming the temporary business rate relief in the last budget. However the Council will be looking at opportunities around supply chains and clusters of businesses in the borough to retain greater amounts of expenditure in-borough and in the sub-regional economy.

- In response to a suggestion for a rethink of the present Council's planning policy which continues to attempt to revive high streets, the Executive Members advised that the challenge is to ensure that local residents have access to the employment opportunities within the creative and tech businesses in the borough.
- On the question of the quality and sustainability of jobs facilitated by external partners, the meeting was advised that the Service now have an understanding of what each organisation currently does in terms of tracking, and are in the process of drawing up data sharing agreements with each of them and will report outcomes at a future meeting.

The Chair thanked Cllr Shaikh for the presentation to the Committee and in particular with the layout of its dashboard.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

319 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT (2019/2020) - EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS (Item B3)

Councillor Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic Development presented the Q1 Performance Indicator Report. A copy of the presentation would be interleaved with the agenda.

In the discussion, the following points were made:

- Members were informed that the number of residents supported back into work through its Employment Partnership was 244, against the profiled target of 200. The Partnership aims to increase employment for Islington residents by co-location and sharing information on vacancies and other local opportunities.
- The Employment Partnership strategic approach ensures that employment provision in the borough meets the needs of identified priority groups such as parents of those aged 0-18, people with disability or long-term health conditions, young aged 18-25 and BAME.
- Engaging with unemployed young adults aged 18-25 remains a challenge as there is no accurate statistics for employment rates for this group, however Council services and partners aim to support at least 396 young people aged 18-25 into employment this year. In addition members were advised that at the end of Q1, the Council had 93 outcomes against a profiled target of 40 which represents an improvement on last year outcomes.
- Members were advised that 2 Islington residents had been supported into Council's apprenticeship in Quarter 1 and the Council's HR Service leads the in house programme. 19 apprentices will commence work within the Council during the autumn and placed in Business Administration, Housing & Property Management, Accounting, Data Management and Project

Management.

- Members were advised of the 1,497 learners that had enrolled during the 2018/19 academic year, less by 100 compared to the previous year, a reflection of the national trend. Officers noted that engaging more learners remains one of the over-arching priorities of the service in 2019/20. In addition the Executive Member informed members that five weeks of the academic year will be used as ACL learning weeks, an opportunity for the team to promote the service in libraries and Bright Start centres and to attract new learners and deliver short community learning based provision.
- Meeting was advised of the enormous work carried out by key internal partners such as Bright Start, iWork, communities and libraries and each area allocated ACL leads. ACL will be delivering an accredited Level 1 Fashion course at Durham Road Community Rooms in Finsbury Ward.
- The Executive Member recognised the efforts of both ACL and iWork in developing additional courses with Health and Social Care employers to as a route into work for residents who are looking for a career or a pathway into that field. Members were also informed that the newly recruited Head of Service will be in post soon and will be looking at ways of improving the offer.
- Meeting was informed that by the end of June 2019 there were 263,359 visits to Islington Libraries, slightly above the figures of visits in the first quarter of 2018/19, slightly below the profiled target set for Q1 2019/20. Members were advised that some of the libraries had been renovated and invited to view and visit it.
- Members were informed that the Council continues to embed social value in its council commissioning/procurement exercises by creating apprenticeships and entry-level jobs with its suppliers for local residents.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

320

QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT (2019/2020) - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT - TO FOLLOW (Item B4)

Councillor Webbe, Executive Member, Environment and Transport presented the Q1 Performance Indicator Report. The following points were highlighted :

- Islington Council working in conjunction with North London Waste Authority has set up its first low Plastic Zone and in comparison to 7 London authorities, Islington has the largest number of businesses sign up's for the initiative. The Executive Member indicated that the decision by over 50% of shops and businesses to take steps to reduce the use of excessive and unnecessary and plastic was welcome and rebuts the view that there is a lack

of appetite amongst businesses to change their behaviour.

- Meeting was informed of the incredible efforts of the Energy and Efficiency team in ensuring that Islington Council is rated the first local authority to address fuel poverty and reduce fuel bills among its residents with initiatives such as the Bunhill Heat Network, SHINE and Angelic Energy.
- The Executive Member welcomed the success of Islington Bloom which was held recently and noted in particular for attracting the highest number of entries for the first time. The Executive Member for Environment acknowledged the excellent work carried out by Parks, Green and Open Spaces Team in organising the event. The Council will be participating in both the London in Bloom and Britain in Bloom events, a testimony that despite Islington being a small inner London authority, with few and small parks has the ability and capacity to showcase the excellence of their parks.
- In response to reports of Ofgem plans to revoke Robin Hood's licence, partners to Islington's Angelic Energy, the meeting was informed that the situation is presently being monitored and any difficulties would not impact Angelic Energy or its customers. Members were advised that Energy regulators have in place robust procedures to protect Angelic Energy and that there will no impact on tax payers.
- In response to the fall in household recycling rates, the Executive Member for Environment and Transport acknowledged the challenges in raising the recycling rates, however members were reminded that Islington remains the fifth highest recycling authority among the twelve inner London boroughs.
- On the suggestion of removing the air quality measure from the suite of indicators, the Executive Member for Environment acknowledged that considering all the schools have monitors outside the school, this could be an opportunity to consider other measures.
- In response to a request that any anomalies from the monitoring tube be reported, meeting was reminded that data will still need to be verified by the office of the Mayor of London so data would be out of date.
- On the issue of contamination, the Executive Member agreed that more needs to be done with regards to nappies and the Council in conjunction with North London Waste Authority and the consortium continue to look at ways of highlighting this issue among its residents.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

321 **WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020 (Item B5)**
RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

CHAIR