

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 13 January 2020

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 13 January 2020 at 7.30 pm.

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

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

322 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Convery and Khurana.

323 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members

324 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

325 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

326 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

In response to concerns about Angelic Energy/Robin Hood and its failure to adhere to procedures with Energy regulator Ofgem, the Corporate Director Environment and Regeneration informed members that the issue had now been resolved and that two members of staff had left the organisation. Members were reassured that within the industry there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect residents and customers from hikes in energy tariffs.

With regards to complaints about high energy prices and the drop in resident take up of the services of Angelic Energy, meeting was advised of the competitive nature of the industry. Members were advised that the Council would be reviewing its relationship with Robin Hood at the end of its tenure, an opportunity to consider other options such as the GLA energy provider Octopus.

The Chair reminded members that witnesses will be invited to the next meeting to consider the scrutiny topic- behavioural changes. The committee clerk to liaise with the lead officer.

327 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

328 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

None

329 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/2020- EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS (Item B1)

Councillor Shaikh, the Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs, presented the Q1 Performance Indicator Report.

In the discussion, the following points were discussed.

- Members were informed that 677 residents had been supported back into work through its Employment Partnership, against the profiled target of 500. The Partnership aims to increase employment for Islington residents by co-location of partners, and continue sharing information on vacancies and other local opportunities. The Executive Member advised that local partners had signed up to this new way of working to create a coherent and comprehensive offer to residents who are unemployed or require in work support.
- The meeting was advised that performances were strong over Q2 and that targets will be met over the course of the year. The Executive Member reiterated that the profiled targets for all the priority groups have been exceeded and welcomed in particular the positive direction of travel on the same period for last year.
- Members were informed that more work needs to be done with regards providing employment support for parents of children aged 0-18 into work. The Service continues to work with schools on this issue, and recognises that both data collection and sharing is paramount in resolving this area.
- Members were informed that only 26 Islington residents had been supported into Council apprenticeship against the profile target of 52 and although there was an autumn intake of 16 apprentices in Q2, compared to 2 in the previous quarter, the reforms introduced have broadened the range, quality and organisational relevance of apprenticeships available.
- The Executive Member reiterated to Members that as new specialist training is often longer, this reduces the volume of new starts but enhances the value of the experience for apprentices. For example 6 Housing Property Service Apprenticeship post created in 2018 were not filled in 2019 until the current apprentices had completed especially as these post span a 2 year training period.

- Members were reminded about the National Apprenticeship Week 2020 taking place between 3-8 February, an opportunity to bring the whole apprenticeship community together to celebrate the impact of apprenticeship on individuals, employer and the economy.
- With regards to Adult and Community Learning Courses, the Executive Member acknowledged that in 2018/19, 1,497 learners enrolled across accredited learning provision, 100 less than the previous year. Members were advised that this decline is in line with the national trend. Members were reminded that irrespective of this decline and achievement rates, the last few years have been consistently high as Islington remains one of the top 5 ACL services in London based on National Achievement rates. Members were introduced to the new Head of Adult Community Learning, Ahmed Akeel.
- On the issue of sustainment in work, members were informed that although iWork has commenced monitoring of sustained outcomes at 13,26 and 52 weeks, the Service needs to consider how to develop its relationship with this cohort especially with employers. Members were advised that the Service has dedicated a resource within the team to enable a more systematic process of monitoring sustainability through regular follow up with both the resident and employer. The Executive Member indicated that officers will report back to committee at a future meeting on this issue.
- In response to concerns that Council was not using its influence to encourage employers located within the borough to provide opportunities for the unemployed young adults, the Executive Member acknowledged that the Council recognises the high number of young people in NEET, however issues such as lack of functional skills among the group, young people with traumatic experiences results in young people having few opportunities. The Executive Member acknowledged that the Council through its ACL services will continue with programmes to provide both functional and life skills, support and work with employers to address this shortcoming.
- On the issue of high child poverty levels and whether this was related to refugee status unable to access public funds, the Executive Member indicated that she would look into this issue especially as the Service is able to provide breakdown details of residents that receives support and will report back at a future meeting.
- In response to the Council's commitment of providing 100 hours of world work for young people, members were invited to the launch at the Institute of Physics on Tuesday 21st January. Head teachers had been invited.
- On the question of whether the council had data on workers involved especially in the Night Time Economy and if workers received the London Living Wage, the Executive Member acknowledged that although no data is presently available, the Council is concerned about worker exploitation within the gig economy and will be considering ways of regulating employer

practices, as a way of protecting vulnerable employees.

- In response to an enquiry on whether the Council was taking cognisance of the potential green jobs while it engages with employers, the Executive Member acknowledged that the Council Energy Team is in the process of producing its strategy and the Inclusive Economy Team is working in conjunction with City University on initiatives such as wind turbines and other green initiatives.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

330

QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20 - ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT (Item B2)

The Chair introduced and welcomed Councillor Champion, the newly appointed Executive Member for Environment and Transport to the meeting.

- Councillor Champion informed the meeting that future quarterly reports will now include performance indicators which measures progress in reducing the Council's own CO2 emissions from council operational buildings and the Council Transport fleet. Quarterly reports will also include performance data relating to road safety.
- Councillor Champion invited Members to the launch of the Vehicle to Grid project at the Town Hall on Wednesday 15 January. The project involves a technology that allows the chargers to work in reverse so that electric vehicles acting as batteries will be used to provide power to the Town Hall. Members were advised that the core advantage of this technology is that it allows vehicles to be charged overnight when electricity is cheap which is then returned back to the building where it receives power at times when electricity consumption is peak and therefore more expensive or returned to the national grid deriving an income.
- In response to an enquiry on whether Committee would still be able to consider Air quality monitoring data around Islington schools, the Director acknowledged that the Committee will be kept informed, however there are ongoing discussions on how it will be presented.
- On the reported increase of transport related deaths and serious injuries on Islington roads and Council's plans to address it, the Director, Environment and Regeneration advised Members that considering this was the first set of data received, this would need to be fully analysed after which specific measures on how to address the incidents will be considered. Members were assured that Council is committed in ensuring that roads in the borough remain safe for both pedestrians and cyclists.

- With regards to the refurbishment of Highbury pools, Members were informed that due to contractual and insurance obligations this will be restoration and not a replacement hence issues of carbon emissions are not a consideration.
- In response to complaints regarding the siting and placement of electric vehicle charging points on pavements and footways, the Director informed the meeting that he will be meeting the Transport Lead Officer which will be an opportunity to understand and discuss the issues around the infrastructure. On the suggestion of lamp post electric charging points, members were informed of cost implications, hence the present siting of boxes on pavements. The Director acknowledged residents' concerns especially when it impact public safety and the importance of being sensitive to resident's concerns. The meeting was informed that instances where public safety is likely to be compromised, this should be brought to the attention of relevant officers immediately.
- With regards to the council's timetable in meeting its commitment of being carbon neutral by 2030, members were informed that despite the elections in December 2019 and pending GLA elections in May 2020, a report will be considered by Executive in February 2020. Members were advised that it is important that both Islington's Transport and Carbon Strategy is in place to ensure that the commitment is delivered.
- In response to a suggestion on whether Council had plans to install electric charging points in loading and parking bays instead of on pavements, the Director acknowledged that all options will be considered and this will be looked at on a street by street basis. Members were advised that at present, the Council through it's initiatives is more focussed on a move away or behaviour change from private ownership of cars to the use of public transport and to encourage more walking and cycling.
- On concerns that Council had not provided targets on its commitment of being zero emission by 2030, the Director acknowledged that it is common practice for baseline reporting at this stage, however targets would be set later when first the Transport Strategy has been agreed and after a 12 month trial period.

RESOLVED:

That the 2 new performance indicators be agreed

Household Recycling.

In the discussion the following points were made -

- Meeting was informed that Council has been able to secure external funding which has enabled the delivery of a major food waste campaign called 'small change big difference', involving community centres and council buildings.
- The Street Scene Strategy Manager informed members that a training programme for 120 caretakers had been carried out on this issue and that new recycling facilities has now been rolled out to all it's offices and community centres. In addition meeting was informed of the soft launch of recycling champions.
- Members were advised that on 17 October 2019, the Council's Waste Reduction and Recycling Action Plan (WRRP) was formally adopted. The Strategy sets out a detailed action plan to reduce waste, increase recycling, reduce emissions from waste activities and improving local waste sites. Members were reminded that the Action plan is a strategic document supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration.
- In response to a suggestion that low recycling rates experienced on housing estates was due to the location and design of the bins, the Manager acknowledged the challenge but noted that solutions vary from estate to estate. Meeting was informed that solutions offered are aimed at making recycling convenient for all.
- On the question of whether officers had observed any noticeable improvement in recycling rates or behaviour change with residents since officers started implementing the recommendations, the Street Scene Strategy Manager advised that it was early days in assessing the amount of waste produced due to lack of data, however it was noticeable the behaviour change amongst the caretakers following the training provided.
- In response to concerns that despite Islington Council's achievement as the first 'Low Plastic Zone' among the 7 inner London borough, big businesses such as supermarkets in the borough were not contributing to the reduction of plastics use, the Director acknowledged the authority's role in fostering a good business environment, however only national legislation by central government will result in business participation.

332

PROCUREMENT OF COUNCIL FLEET VEHICLES/ULEZ AND ITS IMPACT (Item B4)

The Corporate Fleet and Transport Manager gave a presentation to the Committee regarding the procurement of the Council vehicles. The following issues were highlighted during the discussion:

- Meeting was advised that with the introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in April 2019, vehicles failing to meet the required minimum emission standards will be subjected to ULEZ charges and that Council vehicles not classified as EuroVI/6 and Euro 4 Petrol will incur daily charges which range from £12.50 for cars and small vans to £100 for large vehicles.
- With regards to the ULEZ charges, Members were advised that the Council incurred significant charges at the onset of ULEZ, however due to its recent procurement strategy which requires replacement of council vehicles to low emission vehicles it is noticeable that the charges are falling. The Manager informed Members that the latest figures had not been made available from Transport for London as data is collated.
- The Corporate Fleet and Transport Manager advised members that since 2017/18, the percentage of the council's ULEZ compliant vehicles has increased to 90% from 32% with further plans to improve the fleet when the lease arrangement of the vehicles come to an end.
- Non ULEZ compliant vehicles within the Council fleet is decreasing, with the remaining vehicles being completely replaced at the latest in 2021. Members were advised that although in 2017/18, 90% of the council vehicles was diesel powered, it is noticeable that there has been a significant fall especially as the Service aims to contribute to the Council's aim to reduce carbon emission by 2030 to zero.
- With regards to carbon emissions from council vehicles, the Manager acknowledged that until all vehicles are linked onto the National grid with the introduction of electric vehicles this will remain a challenge.
- In highlighting the emission levels of different fuel type, the Fleet Manager noted that when diesel cars are replaced by electric vehicles where for example diesel fuel emits a carbon value of 2.62 kg per litre, vehicles powered by the grid is estimated to have a carbon value which equates to roughly 25-30% of diesels' value.
- Meeting was advised that although most of the Council fleet are powered by diesel especially the RCV's, the council's cleanest diesel vehicles conform to Euro VI(heavy) and Euro 6 (light) emission standards for exhaust tail pipe output. The Manager acknowledged that only electric type of vehicles will have no tailpipe emissions.
- In response to a suggestion that reducing the size of the Council fleet and considering other alternative working patterns would quickly address emission concerns, the Fleet Manager indicated that among a number of measures introduced, the Council had reduced its fleet size, replaced its heavy duty type of vehicle's used by Housing services with lighter 7.5 ton vehicles. In addition, Members were informed that the Council had recognised the value of investing in the maintenance of oil and tyre of

vehicles so as to reduce engine wear and tyre abrasion.

- On the suggestion that council officers be encouraged to use electric assisted bicycles especially where duties are of a supervisory nature, the Fleet Manager that although there have been discussions with various council services, it will be for individual Services to take their decision as is notable with the Street Environment Services which recently took a decision to take one of its 8.5 ton diesel vehicles out of operation.
- Members were informed that although technology is not presently available for the heavy duty vehicles such as the Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCV), the Service was in discussion with the manufacturers on the possibility of retro fitting some of the diesel fuelled vehicles with electric power engines just a few years before the lease expires so as to extend their life span. In addition, meeting was informed that Street Environment Services had just taken delivery of a fully electric powered RCV which will be piloted to assess its effectiveness.
- The Chair thanked the Manager for the update received and importantly welcomed the direction of travel especially with the council's climate emergency declaration and it's willingness to be carbon neutral by 2030.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

333 WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020 (Item B5)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR