

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 16 November 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the virtual meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2020 at 7.30 pm.

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

Also Present: O'Halloran

Councillor Dave Poyser in the Chair

396 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Khondoker and Champion (Executive Member)

397 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

398 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

399 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

That, subject to the deletion of the name 'Ozedmir' and the insertion of the name 'Ozdemir' in the list of Members present, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 September 2020 be confirmed, and the Chair be authorised to sign them

Matters arising – the Chair emphasised the importance of the committee's work pointing out that the minutes of the committee were a public record on Angel Energy

400 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair reported on the following –

Scrutiny Review – Draft Behavioural Change

The Chair stated that the above review report had been amended following Members comments, the final report would now go to the Executive. The Chair stated that the Committee, in addition to the normal 12 month review for an update on the progress of recommendations, would receive an interim update six months after the report was considered by the Executive.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Review on Behavioural Change be forwarded to the Executive for consideration

Dixon Clark Court

The Chair raised the issue about the removal of trees at Dixon Clark Court which is still ongoing however recognises the increasing demand for social housing in the Borough.

Special meeting of the Committee

The Chair reminded Members that as had been previously agreed a special meeting of the Committee would be held in February/March 2021 along the lines of the one held in March 2020. The meeting will involve the public and stakeholders, and that arrangements were being made in this regard, and asked for members to contact him or the committee clerk with feedback on the previous meeting to improve the 2021 meeting.

Finally, the Chair notified the meeting that Councillor Champion was unable to make the meeting due to a family bereavement and that Members of the Committee would want to send her their condolences.

401 **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)**

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

402 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions

403 **ISLINGTON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2020 TO 2025 (Item B1)**

Sally Oldfield, Nature and Conservation Manager, and Barry Emerson, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, Environment and Regeneration Department were present and made a presentation to the Committee (copy interleaved)

During the presentation the following main points were made –

- A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is an internationally recognised template for protecting and restoring the natural environment. There is a UK BAP and a London BAP and each London Borough aims to have its own BAP. The new Islington BAP is the third for Islington, and covers the period 2020-25.
- Diversity is important for health and wellbeing, for young people, eco-system services, biodiversity and economics, and climate change
- Key priorities in Islington's BAP – to conserve existing habitats, biodiversity features and species, improve/enhance the condition of existing areas of habitat, create new habitats or increase the extent of existing habitats, engage the whole community in reducing environmental inequality by increasing access to green spaces
- Four action plans – the built environment, Parks and Urban green spaces, designated sites and access to nature

- Built Environment Action Plan – includes maintain and enhance street trees, maximise biodiversity gains from new developments, requiring installation of green roofs on new developments and Council buildings, encourage sustainable urban drainage systems, identify opportunities to green streets through development of pocket parks and other improvements
- Parks and Open spaces Action Plan – Islington has the smallest amount of greenspace per head of population of any London Borough. However, it has the second highest number of parks. The plan includes – protect and enhance new wildlife habitats in parks and open green spaces e.g. housing estates, protect and enhance trees in parks and open spaces, ensure wildlife habitats are managed effectively, collate species data, and protect and enhance features for London BAP priority species
- Designated Sites Action Plan – Review Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SINC) data to ensure accurate and up to date, strengthen network through the adoption of new and upgraded SINC's, liaise with Network Rail on the protection of rail side SINC's, action to reduce areas of deficiency in access to nature
- Access to Nature Action Plan – raise awareness of biodiversity through public events, enable people from under - represented groups to take part in biodiversity activities, encourage and support community action for wildlife, provide volunteering activities, aim to provide every child in Islington with the opportunity to experience high quality outdoor environmental education, encourage biodiversity on housing estates, provide residents with guidance on wildlife gardening, enable people to derive the health and wellbeing benefits of contact with nature
- Online consultation – consultation has taken place and there was strong support for BAP and this was adopted by Executive in September 2020 and is available on Council website
- Examples of new projects – Octopus Community network to develop a gardening and food growing programme, new funding bid to develop a partnership with Camden that will deliver green space benefits, with voluntary sector and an ambitious new bulb planting project on housing estates across the borough. Projects include Freeling Street Pocket Park Project, Parks for Health Project and a capital spend project to improve biodiversity on the New River, new leaflet on birds in Islington Parks
- In response to a question regarding Bulb planting, and whether this included TMOs it was stated that Housing had directly funded this scheme and that the Committee could be updated as to whether this included TMOs
- It was stated that housing estates presented an opportunity to increase diversity in areas that are deficient in greenspace
- In response to a question it was stated that the expectation was that there would be no loss of biodiversity at Dixon Clark Court
- Reference was made to the fact that 17% of residents in the borough lived in areas of deficiency, where greenspace or biodiversity was insufficient, and there is a need to increase biodiversity in these areas, and that housing estates were key in this
- In response to a question as to whether there is an opportunity to comment on planning applications in relation to biodiversity, it was stated that the

Council were always looking for biodiversity net gains, and they are invited comment on applications. There is also a dedicated trees officer who comments on applications

- In response to a question as to BAME and disadvantaged groups not accessing greenspace, it was stated that awareness needed to be raised in the community. Reference was made to the Parks for Health Project, which is looking to get businesses and communities involved and that the Council's Equalities team were looking at the barriers to BAME and disadvantaged groups accessing greenspace. There were also social prescribing initiatives and events.
- A Member referred to the need to look into issues around sustainable drainage and that greenspaces should be pesticide free. In response the officer stated that at present there is no policy in place on this, however sites are managed carefully to protect wildlife. Officer acknowledged that there is a scheme in place for sustainable drainage, and important to think creatively with developers so as to ensure water conservation
- Reference was made by a member of the public about pocket parks and the need to involve the community in this. It was stated that officers would respond on details of this.

The Chair thanked Sally Oldfield and Barry Emmerson for their presentation

404 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTS 2020/2021 - EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Item B2)

This item was dealt with in conjunction with minute 405 below

405 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2019/2020 (Item B3)

Councillor Asima Shaikh, Executive Member Inclusive Jobs and Economy was present, together with Andrea Stark, Director of Employment, Skills and Culture and Caroline Wilson, Head of Inclusive Economic Development for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, copy interleaved

During discussion of the presentation the following main points were made –

- Current context – prior to the pandemic Islington residents in a vulnerable financial position, working in low paid, insecure jobs. Lack of middle-tiered skilled secure jobs, and many residents running small and micro businesses and these businesses disproportionately owned by women and people from BAME communities. Post COVID to end May 2020 17847 Islington households claiming Universal Credit. Islington unemployment rate risen from 3% of workforce to 7.2% in August and the number of workers on furlough increased by 36% between June and August
- Emerging Community and Wellbeing strategic framework – this is designed to reduce inequality and poverty – focusing on Local Economies and supply chains, employment support, business support

- **Headline achievements** – delivered emergency support to thousands of Islington businesses, tailored advice, brokerage and support for local businesses, opened affordable workspaces in Fonthill Road for Tech and Fashion and secured flagship Ray Building in Clerkenwell which will deliver over £2.5m of social value
- **Adult Employment support** – 1318 residents supported into local employment, community and outreach engagement, new support for deaf jobseekers, Islington working partnership, Islington working e bulletin, developed the Islington Directory
- **Youth Employment, Progression and Skills 2019/20** – 307 young people supported into employment, launch event of World of Work, Progression of Council apprentices 83% into further employment on completion of apprenticeship, Post 16 participation – an improvement of NEET or unknown for 16 and 17 year olds and better than London and England
- **Adult and Community Learning** – successful OFSTED, increased learner enrolments, supporting learners through COVID, fundraising through bid for a re-skilling programme
- **Libraries and Heritage 2019/20**– renovation of Central Library, tribute to Andrea Levy, over a million visits to Libraries, 904 children completed Summer reading programme, and facilitating more online library transactions due to COVID
- **Community Wealth Building actions 2019/20** – delivering employment targets and outcomes, support to small and micro businesses, delivering good growth funds, support to Town Centres, high streets and street markets, delivering local social value, and keeping learning alive during pandemic
- **Community Wealth Building next 12 months** – supporting good work on employment, ensuring local people have the right skills, supporting local economies, fostering responsible business and a progressive procurement approach, supporting local businesses and affordable workspaces, improving economic well-being for local people
- **Employment next 12 months**- develop an ambitious COVID employment support response, increase social value requirements from contractors, expand iWork service and partnership reach, engage and support parents, refreshed approach to extend engagement with BAME communities, strengthen data collection, analysis and reporting
- **Employment Engagement and sector focus** – Health and Social Care Academy working with commissioners and GP Practices offering dedicated local recruitment programme, construction team working with Housing New Build Team to enforce apprenticeship commitments with contractors, inclusive knowledge economy programme tech and digital, green economy
- **Youth Employment** – reframed Islington Skills Strategy, implementation of new Youth Employability and Skills targeted programme, a team LBI/Islington approach to improve education, employment, and training outcomes for young people
- **Skills – Adult and Community Learning** – Develop a recovery skills strategy, strengthen digital infrastructure, challenge digital exclusion, accessible advice and guidance, a responsive curriculum

- Libraries and Heritage – continue to develop online services, befriending calls to isolated residents and delivering books to children, develop a recovery plan to enable libraries and museums to reopen safely, re-establish activities programme, highlight and celebrate Black authors and diversity
- Rebuilding local economies and Town Centres – help local economies to plan for recovery, supporting local people and businesses, sustainable Town Centres, supporting local workspaces, supporting local wealth, supporting the local place
- Fostering responsible business and a progressive procurement approach – build on responsible business practice, support more local SME's to compete for Council contracts, develop incentives to support circular economy and greener businesses, strengthen Council approach to achieve more social value from its commission contracts, develop pathfinder project between Adult Social Care, embedding inclusive economy objectives in commissioning and delivery model, deliver affordable workspaces
- Improving economic well-being for local people – crisis support, income maximisation, managing household finances, reaching those communities most in need of employment support, support to find and secure a good job, supporting those in work to find better employment
- Noted that there had been a decrease in employment targets due to COVID 19, however the manifesto target of helping 4000 residents into work had been exceeded
- Noted that Islington was one of 5 top Local Authorities to ensure business loans had been distributed efficiently
- In response to a question it was stated that during COVID, 100 hours of work experience for school children were still being delivered virtually. There are also careers training meetings, and sectors where work may be available in future were being looked at
- Noted that the iWork team provided support for the most vulnerable in terms of employment, and a signposting service was available, and a framework is being developed for those residents who have become recently unemployed with higher skills to direct them to appropriate agencies for support
- Council residents were also being contacted to offer employment support where necessary, and a skills recruitment strategy was being developed, as some residents will need to retrain. Noted that the Council had maintained contact with 461 employers during lockdown, and the Health and Care Academy had a wide spread of jobs by working with health partners
- Members stated that they wish to commend Councillor Shaikh and the staff for all their excellent work during the pandemic
- A Member stated that whilst the figures were excellent for 2019/20, these were now out of date, and that there are now 28000 residents on Universal Credit, and 31000 residents furloughed. The Member added that he welcomed the initiatives in the Cally/Finsbury Park area. Councillor Shaikh stated that the Quarter 2 performance figures would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee
- In response to a question it was stated that with regards to managed workspace there had been problems with certain sites, however alternative

provision were being looked at, and Cally Ward Councillors would be kept informed

- A Member referred to the circular economy and enquired whether a different type of support was needed for residents especially as there has been an increase in those claiming Universal Credit. It was stated that the Resident Support team has extended support, and an economic wellbeing offer was being developed, together with wrap around support for individual residents. This included enabling residents to maximise benefits, especially OAP's. With regard to the circular economy this was not an immediate priority however this would be looked at as part of the green economy agenda, and work with Town Centres would be developed in the next few months
- Members were informed that there is a need to take advantage of funding opportunities to develop green jobs, especially with regards to the Council New Build programme and retrofitting, however there may be problems in obtaining funding to carry out retrofitting. A Construction and Skills Academy was also being looked at

The Chair thanked Councillor Shaikh, Andrea Stark and Caroline Wilson for the presentation

406 **SCRUTINY REVIEW - OVERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S 2030 NET ZERO CARBON PROGRAMME - TO FOLLOW (Item B4)**

Keith Townsend, Director of Environment and Regeneration was present for discussion of this item, and made a presentation to the Committee, during which the following main points were made –

- Climate change is clear the level of global warming related to the amount of Carbon Dioxide that human activities add to the atmosphere
- The Climate Change Act 2008 has set the UK to achieve net zero carbon borough by 2030
- Islington declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019 net zero carbon borough by 2030, and a draft strategy published February 2020. Special meeting held of E&R in February 2020. Consultation process from April to end July 2020 and Executive report in November 2020
- What does this mean for Islington – developing a net Zero Carbon strategy for Islington, 4% of Islington's carbon emissions are from our operations and buildings and 9% of gas boilers in council-owned homes are included. There are 679,600 tonnes of emissions in the borough
- The strategy at a glance – residential buildings, Commercial and industrial buildings and infrastructure – improve the energy efficiency and reduce the level of carbon emissions of all buildings and infrastructure. Transport – reduce emissions in the borough for transport. Sustainable and affordable energy generation and supply – increase local generation of renewable heat and electricity, increase the update of affordable and renewable energy tariffs and mitigate fuel poverty. The Green Economy and Planning – deliver on net zero carbon target whilst assuring the economic success and vitality of the borough by working closely with the 18800 businesses in the borough, most of them small or micro sized. The natural environment and waste

reduction and recycling – integrate ongoing activities in recycling and reducing waste and managing our natural environment

- Our approach – identified short, medium and long term commitments and actions, and there is a need to work with partners, consult and engage extensively, have cross- Council working to support the commitments and action plan, significant development of a programme with workstreams and detailed workplans, how to engage with residents, businesses and organisations
- Governance model in place
- How progress can be measured – Pilot of ClimateView software – used by both Newcastle and Nottingham City Councils, visualise challenges and targets, setting targets link related ongoing or planned actions, access and adapt – for each transition target the listed actions are sufficient, insufficient or unrealistic
- In response to a question as to whether electric boilers would be installed at the Holloway Prison development with Peabody Trust it was stated that if the member of the public wished to write to the Executive Member Housing, Councillor Ward he would respond thereon
- In response to a question as to supplementary planning guidance changes in relation to the Net Zero Carbon strategy, it was stated that this was under consideration and being developed
- It was stated that in relation to the ClimateView proposal that work progress would be reported back to the Committee in approximately 6 months. However, behavioural change would be needed in a number of areas, and there would need to be engagement with the community, through a communications strategy, and applying the recommendations of the recent Scrutiny Review on Behavioural Change
- Key risks and next steps – Lack of direct control, dependency on other parties such as Government, GLA, businesses, Borough partners, residents.
- Creating organisation momentum and capacity to deliver the programme, financial resources investment and benefits not clearly defined, developing a detailed scope and plan for each workstream in order to be clear about what we will do directly, what we could do, and what we will do to influence and work with others
- Net Zero Carbon strategy approval – November report to Executive recommending additional capital investment, and revenue funding, required to deliver strategy, note detailed proposals for borough partner and anchor institution engagement, note role of E&R scrutiny Committee, approve officers to work on pan-London basis as part of the London Climate Change programme. Also note further work is underway to develop the scope and detail in relation to resident engagement, including a net zero carbon themed Citizens Assembly and to adopt a Net Zero Carbon strategy and Action Plan
- Scrutiny work – 18 month E&R programme to allow for detailed scrutiny of key chapters of the strategy, regular programme update, opportunity to meet with delivery teams and detailed understanding of the workstreams to shape future scrutiny programme and have guest speakers an external experts
- Scrutiny Work Programme – 4 February – Green Economy and Planning commitments, 8 March – Transport and Sustainable and affordable energy

generation and supply commitments, 27 April – Residential Buildings, Commercial and Industrial Buildings and Infrastructure and the Natural Environment and Waste Reduction and Recycling commitments. This will support the Committee to determine its work programme for 2021/22

- Noted that work is taking place with London Councils, and the Mayor of London to develop a climate change programme for London, and Islington will be the lead authority on energy
- A Member stated that there is a need to ensure water conservation is included in any strategy, and a focus on solar panels to heat water. It was stated that planning policy was being looked in order to include water usage and conservation
- A Member expressed the view that community experts should be involved, and consulted on proposals, and there is a need to consider how to engage them in future. It was stated that there would be engagement in this regard, and that the special meeting to be held with stakeholders in February/March will seek to build on this
- A Member stated that there is a need for the planning process to complement the Net Zero Carbon strategy, and it was stated that there were opportunities through the Local Plan, and supplementary planning guidance to influence this
- In response to a question about the need to engage TfL, it was stated that the Government bailout of TfL, and the Department of Transport had given a block funding grant to TfL and it was hoped that this would assist in developing local schemes

RESOLVED:

That the scrutiny review programme be approved, and that water conservation be added to the waste/recycling work stream

The Chair thanked Keith Townsend for his presentation

407 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021 (Item B5)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted, subject to the addition of London Power as an item on the agenda for the meeting on 17 December 2020.

The meeting ended at 9.45 p.m.

CHAIR