ISLINGTON

Behavioural Change/Science

FINAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

London Borough of Islington
November 2020

CHAIR'S FOREWORD/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The key to achieving Islington's 2030 carbon-neutral target ultimately lies in changing behaviour. The Council needs to consider longer-term goals in achieving this, however shorter- term measures proposed in our recommendations will enable the Council to start the process of achieving these aims

The Council therefore needs to understand, and comprehensively adopt, an assessment of users' behaviour, and the monetary or psychological incentives to change such behaviours, if necessary

The Committee is of the view that all relevant Environment and Regeneration services, which require citizens in the borough to change their behaviour, such as recycling, should be delivered using evidence-based behaviour science.

Adopting behavioural change in environmental services is about an effective uptake of council services, that in the long-term could frequently save money for the borough, promote good behaviour, and result in indirect savings in other departmental services. This could involve more active travel, cleaner shared space, and cleaner private spaces, and less anti-social behaviour as there are costs in health care, street cleaning, and officer time spent on patrolling streets

Behavioural change campaigns would involve reviewing the way services are designed and delivered to residents in line with 'East' principles (easy, attractive, social and timely) providing the appropriate 'kit' (e.g. brown boxes for household waste). (e.g. brown boxes for household waste) . It may also involve a strategy to encourage and promote the desired behaviour (an appropriate and effective mix of social media, targeted/untargeted e-mails, door knocking, street-signs, letters delivered, press campaigns etc.), and the wording on the communications material.

The Committee is of the view that the Council could often make it easier for behavioural change to occur, such as in some instances of recycling on estates. Messages by leafletting, financial incentives, and general communication to residents should be looked at, together with appropriate investment in 'kit', with a view to changing behaviour and getting the right message across to residents. Behavioural change is about making things easier for residents, and this may require investment in the right 'kit' to enable them to do this. Effective messaging and providing the right equipment, in order to enable the residents to effect change is key

The Committee believes that by achieving methods that result in behavioural change is not simple or easy. It requires tailoring communications to the audience. It can be counter-intuitive, and successful results in terms of the behavioural change can sometimes be in the order of 5% or 10%, rather than a dramatic 40%

The ultimate aim of the scrutiny is that its findings, recommendations, and the outcomes of such recommendations may act as guide to other directorates, to encourage them to build behaviour change methods into the design of their services and to improve the delivery of services.

Ultimately, the aim is that service design and supporting communications, especially those aiming to achieve the Borough's 2030 carbon neutral target, will be evidence based. The council should consider investing in developing behaviour change expertise to support delivery of services – possibly within the corporate communications team. The evidence from the scrutiny is that this could be self-financing, with development costs recouped from successful behaviour change projects. There is a need for evidence and lessons learnt in any trials to be disseminated effectively amongst appropriate staff to understand the processes necessary to change behaviour.

The Committee is of the view that an introductory pilot/s of a selection of Environment and Regeneration Services should be carried out in order to assess the effectiveness of behaviour change. The report suggests adopting a 'trial and error' approach, as the evidence suggests behavioural change solutions are not 'one size ' fits all for all Boroughs, and ideally this unit should be experts in the field

The Committee is of the view that behavioural change can be used to influence achieving the Council's Net Zero Carbon strategy by 2030, and to achieve the target of 36% reduction in the Recycling, Waste Reduction by 2025. Work is already taking place on setting specific and detailed targets for each part of the Net Zero Carbon strategy

There are funding opportunities available to address tackling environmental issues and behavioural change projects are eligible e.g. tackling air pollution Mayors Air Quality Fund can fund a behavioural change pilot that looks at improving cycling uptake and reduce cycling on pavements. There will also be the need for some initial 'pump prime' funding to be provided to enable the pilot/s to be initiated

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS SCRUTINY REVIEW – BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

That the Executive be recommended, with a view to supporting the effective implementation of the Council's Zero Carbon strategy –

a) That given the success in a number of other Local Authorities of effective behavioural change being implemented, an appropriate organisation be engaged to undertake a pilot/s project to investigate the provision of applying behavioural change. The pilot project/s should be developed to support the Council's Net Zero Carbon strategy action plan. The pilot project/s should be determined by the Director of Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair of the Committee, Executive Member Environment and Members of the Committee

b) That all council departments should consider how behavioural change can support the delivery of council priorities and desired outcomes and ensure a cross departmental approach to any future behavioural change progress and projects

c) That appropriate 'pump prime' funding be made available for the behaviour change programmes in order to support the development of specific behaviour change trial projects in support of the New Zero Carbon Strategy. Whilst this funding has not yet specifically been identified it is noted that the Director of Environment and Regeneration is working on this, and appropriate funding should be put in place

d) That following the completion of the pilot project, an analysis take place of the effectiveness of the project, and the results submitted to the Environment and Regeneration Committee within six months for review with a view to promoting further work on behavioural change within the Council.

e) That a key element of commissioning and appropriate organisation(s) i includes the transfer of knowledge, expertise and tools to within the Council to enable future capacity and skills within services and corporately e.g. within the strategy and change unit.

f) That, in conjunction with recommendation a) above, an appropriate organisation be engaged to undertake a pilot project to investigate the provision of applying behavioural change techniques to support the implementation of the net zero carbon strategy and as part the council's communications to specific cohorts of residents.

g) That consideration be given to a more localised approach to communications that can target messages to specific cohorts of residents , rather than more generic messages that are often not as effective as they could be

h) That the Council seek funding opportunities to support the pilot and long-term implementation of behavioural change activities e.g. funding from Government, Mayor of London, other organisations, the LGA etc. The Government is supportive of behavioural change approaches, and the Mayor of London and other organisations have various funds that support tackling environmental issues and behavioural changes

Scrutiny Review – Behavioural Change

The aim of the review is to consider ways to change behaviours of both individuals, and organisations/businesses in all areas of activity that will help Islington Council achieve its 2030 environmental targets.

Evidence:
The review ran from September 2019 to November 2020, and evidence was received from a variety of sources:

Witnesses:
Presentation from Islington's Communications Team.
Presentation on Behavioural Science from Professor Ivo Vlaev of Warwick University and Amy Jones of Ernst Young LLP.
Presentation received from Debbie Crossan and Geoff Hinks, IMPOWER

Objectives:
To consider suggestions that help Islington Council achieve its environmental targets

Summary of Findings:

Accessibility to data and developments in psychology, (for example in the popular work of Daniel Kahneman who has won Nobel Prizes in both economics and psychology), has led to a lot of interest form Government. At one point the Government had it's own Nudge unit. The phrase Nudge Economics was invented by two US Academics – Thaler and Sunstein

Human behaviour greatly affects wealth, the environment and society. Importantly in light of the current climate of financial insecurity, IT adds another layer of complexity and challenge. The Committee noted that unhealthy behaviours like smoking, obesity, and healthcare associated infections, are related to the choices people make

The realisation of the need to influence behaviour change in all aspects of society has resulted in institutions and government applying behavioural insights into 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

Applying behavioural science has resulted in improving health outcomes, for example the dramatic fall in levels of smoking across adults in the UK, although this has not been in the case of the poorest members of the society. There is a recognition that behaviour changes of smokers is due to a combination of factors, such as price rises, social marketing campaigns, and public smoking bans

Three conditions are necessary and sufficient for the performance of a specified behaviour, 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, issues to consider are the level of knowledge, awareness and mental stamina in order to engage in understanding and reasoning. The question that needs to be addressed, is whether people will be able to understand the message, will they find it difficult to understand, and is there a role for tools to assist in understanding and reasoning

In terms of opportunity, the Committee were informed of the importance of having environmental infrastructure and technology in place, in order to support and sustain the behaviour, as there is clear evidence to confirm how people are affected by their environment

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

Nudge theory or economics challenges previous theories and practices of addressing human behaviour. It recognises first that the environment has a big impact and questions what action can be taken about human irrationality. Nudge economics recognises that instead of telling people what to do, it needs to work with human nature to effect change

Nudge means pushing people gently, not shoving or forcing them, or persuading them into new and better behaviours, which would result in cost effective measures

The Committee were informed that the importance of the message is to impact behaviour change, there is a need for it to be timely and it is important who delivers the message, as people tend to respond to someone who is recognisable, hence the role of celebrities. Also social norms are relevant, for example sharing what others are doing goes a long way in changing behaviour

The Committee were also informed that offering options will not result in any significant change in behaviour, but by employing default techniques changes in behaviours can be seen, 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 pension schemes, and organ donations, and enrolment becomes automatic, whereas opting out will require a concerted effort

The Committee were informed of 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

The Committee noted that Croydon's Behavioural Science Unit, the first in any local government across the country. The Unit's mission was to discover the root causes of problems in service delivery, design solutions with people in mind, and make the delivery of the service easier. Members were informed that whatever initiative designed it has to be evidence based, and trialled.

In over 2 years, 80 projects had been delivered by the Behavioural Unit (BU), and about 150 members of staff had been upskilled, resulting in lots of benefits and returns on investment

Members heard evidence of the approach employed by Croydon's Behavioural unit, whose sole aim was to improve 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 result is to design something that addresses those behaviours and make it easier. This needs to be tested, and, if necessary amended, and improvements made. The final stage will be to implement and roll it out

Notable examples where behavioural insights approach was employed by the Unit was in addressing the failure of the Council to comply with the statutory deadline of 21 days with Children Looked After. In this instance it was noted that 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

Islington Council's Compliance Team continually engages the public reinforcing the messages of doing the right thing, especially with litter disposal or dog fouling. In addition, Members noted that the Street Environment Services Team had taken part in a successful trial for reducing the anti - social behaviour of chewing gum with a specialist Behaviour Change group. The campaign around transport hubs including Farringdon Station, and a high street bus stop, led to a reduction of gum littering by 48%

Waste enforcement remains an important function of the Compliance Team who carry out enforcement action, and campaigns, to reduce the anti- social problem of fly tipping. In addressing the issue of fly-tipping the efforts of SES, and the Compliance Team, has helped alleviate the issue around some problematic hot-spot locations across the borough

The Committee noted however that there is a financial cost to implementing change, and that behavioural change often needs reinforcement. The Committee noted however that many successful behavioural change projects fund themselves. There is funding available for tackling environmental issues, and behavioural change projects are eligible e.g. if tackling air pollution the Mayors Air Quality Fund could fund a behavioural change pilot that looks at improving cycling update and reduce cycling on pavements. Further funding opportunities are also available such as the LGA etc. However, our recommendations reflect that initially some 'pump prime' funding will need to be available initially

The Committee noted that behavioural change plays a key part when considering long-term goals, as this is an opportunity to build team skills in order to get a more long-term sustainable approach to effect change

The Committee were of the view that a more localised or segmented approach is adopted in certain areas, rather than a generic communications approach. The Committee therefore consider that consideration be given to whether a specific officer should be responsible in corporate communications to more effectively target residents. In addition, the Committee were of the view that where there are 'cross cutting' issues, there is a need for Communications and Departments to improve co-ordination to ensure effective messages is conveyed to residents. It will also be important to ensure that behavioural change techniques is shared amongst Council staff so that they are embedded in the organisation

The Committee also that COVID has provided the Government with an opportunity to effect behavioural change in a number of areas, and may also enable the Council an opportunity to effect behavioural change. This is evidenced by the wearing of 'face masks' before it was made compulsory. However, the message needs to be as simple as possible in order to communicate effectively

Political parties have used behavioural change science all the time. Rather than a blanket doorstop leafletting policy, or blanket social media, political parties have found it effective to target only those households/voters likely to vote for them, and then encourage their likely voters to go and vote. (Source – The Victory Lab, the Secret Science of Winning Campaigns -2012 an analytical description of use of data in Elections – a successful change in political method can result in a 5%-10% change). People are successfully encouraged to vote if they believe others will vote, rather than appealing to the sense of being a good citizen. This same appeal, as not being the odd one out has led to an increase of 15% in payment following non-payment of Council Tax and in Islington this has been used successfully for residents behind with their Council Tax.

 The essence of most interventions is in principle to make things easier, however there are instances where the intervention is designed to make things harder, for example introducing wall climbers to prevent the painting of graffiti on walls.

The Committee received evidence of an example of a staircase with music being built into it to encourage people not to take the lift. In the control, the staircase had no music and was unused. However, in the Fun staircase with music, at a small extra cost, created behaviour change. In addition, the Committee are of the view that if half the borough is issued with for example food recycling bins and there is appropriate communication given about the bins, and 80% of residents take advantage of this, this is a better result than the whole borough getting recycling bins with no appropriate communications, and only 10% using them

Addressing behaviour change also requires 'political buy in' and leadership. In addition, before tackling behaviour among its residents, staff behaviours also need to be addressed, in order to ensure a clear and coherent message is conveyed

It was noted that besides employing nudge techniques to influence behaviour change, some forms of enforcement, and incentives may still be required. There may be the need to take time to assess how measures are affecting behavioural change

Making things accessible will result in an uptake of service or activity, for example, evidence demonstrates that the introduction of cycle paths, and running paths, has led to a significant increase in cyclists, and runners without any form of persuasion. In addition, targeted messages regarding household electrical appliances and its energy use, and savings on electrical bills is well received. In terms of discouraging short journey driving it was noted that mentioning the amount of levels of CO_2 emissions does not work, however stating to residents the cost to their car budget, and by using computerised data, residents take notice

Another success highlighted in evidence, 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

The Committee also received evidence from IMPOWER, an external consultancy who had worked with a number of Local Authorities in behaviour change and had considerable success in achieving behaviour change in reduction of fly tipping as a result of initiatives. The Committee are of the view that given the evidence of the success of Environmental change a 'pilot project' should take place in order to assess the effectiveness of behavioural change in a specific areas, such as food recycling, which could provide cost effective benefits to the Council and contribute towards the 2030 net zero carbon target.

Conclusion

The Committee concluded, that in light of Council's commitment towards meeting its zero carbon emission target by 2030, a lot of work will be required not only by Government in terms of policies and legislation, but also work in crucially influencing behaviour change of individual or businesses. The Committee is of the opinion that consideration should be given to either, or commissioning a consultancy to look at a specific area of the service, which can be piloted.

The Committee recognise that Islington in comparison to its neighbouring authorities has one of the highest recycling rates, especially with its dry waste, however this could be improved if food waste recycling is addressed by employing behavioural techniques.

The Committee is aware that recommendations from a review on household recycling are presently being implemented, however we consider that the area of food recycling could be piloted, in order to assess whether behavioural science can be applied effectively

The Committee also considered that communication is an area that needs to be addressed, especially in terms the message and the language conveyed, as this influences behaviour change.

The Committee would finally like to thank all the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2019/20

Councillors:
Councillor David Poyser (Chair)
Councillor Roulin Khondoker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tricia Clarke
Councillor Paul Convery
Councillor Phil Graham
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Clare Jeapes
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir
Councillor Caroline Russell

Substitutes:
Councillor Nurullah Turan

Acknowledgements:
The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.

Officer Support:
Emma Kidd – Departmental Support Manager
Ola Adeoye – Senior Democratic Services Officer

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)

Review: Behavioural Change

Scrutiny Review Committee: Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Director leading the review: Keith Townsend

Lead Officer(s): Lynne Stratton (Communication) & Emma Kidd (Environment & Regeneration Services)

Overall aim:

To consider ways to change behaviours of both individuals and organisations/ businesses in all areas of activity that will help Islington Council achieve its 2030 environmental targets.

Objectives of the review:

- To consider suggestions that help Islington Council achieve its environmental targets

How is the review to be carried out:

Scope of the review

The review will focus on wide ranging initiatives to raise awareness of businesses, individuals and households on :

Recycling
- Transport and decreasing the use of cars
- All planning communications to households and developers
- Angelic Energy and addressing fuel poverty

Types of evidence:
- Data from the relevant services in Islington, giving comparative benchmarks with other councils.
- Presentations from experts
- Evidence from examples of best practices in local government (possibly Croydon as an authority), Islington's Revenue and Benefits
- Islington local groups, ie Islington Schools and Recycling champions etc.

Additional Information:

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any
other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Key Output
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document - 12 September 2019
2. Draft Recommendations – 29 September 2020
3. Final Report – 29 September 2020