

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 14 September 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Town Hall on 14 September 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Clarke (Chair), Heather (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Jeapes, Khondoker, Russell and Weekes

Councillor Tricia Clarke in the Chair

481 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillor Clarke welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members of the Committee and officers introduced themselves.

482 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

483 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

484 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

485 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair informed the meeting that Cathy Cook of Re London will be attending the informal working group meeting on Thursday 16 September which will be considering how the Council handles and manages waste and recycling.

486 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

487 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

None

488 SCRUTINY REVIEW: NET ZERO CARBON PROGRAMME - BUILDINGS (COMMERCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE) (Item B1)

Matt West, Director of Housing Services and James Wilson, Energy Sustainability and Consulting Manager gave a presentation, with the following points highlighted:

Priority is to reduce carbon emissions from commercial, industrial and public sector buildings, which consist of 158,822tonnes from electricity (54%) 124,080tonnes from gas (42%), 9,892tonnes from 'other' fuels (3%) 166tonnes from large industrial installations and agriculture (0.06%)

Presently 33% of borough emissions emanate from commercial buildings, 7% from public sector buildings and 6% from industrial buildings.

It was noted that emissions from gas in commercial buildings is one of the few areas where there has been no emission reduction since 2005, in fact it has noticeably increased by 4%.

With regards to Council owned buildings, reduction in carbon emissions will be achieved by replacing gas heating with zero carbon alternatives, maximise energy efficiency of buildings through insulation and retrofit, maximise on-site renewables and purchase where possible any remaining electricity needs from renewable sources

In the case of reducing carbon emissions from other commercial/industrial/public sector buildings, the Council will not only continue to raise awareness of the need for businesses to make changes as climate change is a big issue, but encourage local organisations to act and provide support for local organisations to act.

The Council have identified buildings in scope for feasibility studies—all non-Housing and non-school sites, developed a specification for feasibility studies to assess buildings. The Council will be identifying the most cost-effective zero carbon heating system to replace gas boilers, including possible connection to or creation of new district heating networks.

Other proposed measure will include identifying and introducing energy efficiency improvements, such as insulation, glazing, heating controls, lighting upgrades, passive cooling measures.

Members were advised of Council's unsuccessful application for a grant from the Low Carbon Skills Fund which would have enabled the Council carry out the feasibility studies to produce a Heat Decarbonisation Plan for 57 corporate buildings with gas heating.

Over the next 12 months, meeting was advised that the Council will procure and complete the feasibility studies, prioritise buildings for work and create a retrofit programme. It will also identify and try and secure funding to start delivery

With regards schools, the officer advised that so far the Council has successfully applied to the Low Carbon Skills Fund (Nov 2020) for project development funding for pilot feasibility studies at three schools (Beacon High, Drayton Park Primary, New River College), this will provide funding to decarbonise buildings as it becomes available.

In addition, the Council recently applied to the Low Carbon Skills Fund to carry out feasibility studies on 20 additional schools, however this was unsuccessful due to an oversubscription of the fund, but there is another opportunity to apply on 13 September. A Schools page is being planned for net zero information website with ideas for teachers and students

In terms of commercial and industrial buildings, the Council has launched the Energising Small Business Fund, offering grants to small businesses for energy efficiency improvements. In addition the Islington Community Energy Fund, will offers grants to organisation for innovative energy projects, which include energy efficiency measures for buildings.

Council continues to promote the Solar Together scheme to encourage small businesses to install solar PV and it continues to support the Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership (ISEP), which brings together organisations in the borough that are interested in sustainability.

With regards to Residential Homes, Commercial and Industrial buildings, the officer advised that in September the Council will start a business audit scheme for small businesses, launch a new net zero information website in November with a section dedicated to businesses, which his will include information on what organisations can do and how they can do it.

In November, the Council aims to get organisations to pledge action using a pledge tool being developed for the net zero website, refocus ISEP to the net zero agenda and make it more targeted towards smaller businesses.

On whether ventilation measures were being considered as one of the proposed energy improvement efficiency improvements, the Director of Housing Property Services, acknowledged that this is taken into consideration in all the council's new build right from conception and not as an afterthought.

Meeting was advised that staff have a role to play in ensuring the Council meets it's carbon emissions target, that the Council has a staff communication plan, that training modules have been developed which will be delivered via e training and the Council will be appointing recycling champions amongst staff to help promote the council's vision 2030

On the question of whether the Council could take advantage of the Solar Togetherness Scheme, meeting was advised that the eligibility criteria was only suitable for small firms and not corporate organisations like the Council.

The Solar Togetherness Scheme is promoted via Newsletters and also a communication plan exist for small firms to apply and that the Council will be using it's tried and tested channels/forums to signpost firms for such schemes

On timescales with regards to the proposed feasibility assessment to be carried on whether council housing stock would be suitable for solar panels, the officer advised that an external consultant is to be commissioned so it will be completed within the year so that the Council can then move onto the next phase.

On what options exists for replacing the heating system at the Council Town Hall, officers advised that no decision had been taken and that any technology employed or introduced will have been tried and tested . Members were also reminded about the importance of the Enable Vehicle 2 Grid 1 trial in the town hall

The Chair thanked Matt West and James Wilson for their presentation

RESOLVED:

The presentation was noted

489 UPDATE - INFORMAL WORKING GROUP (NORTH LONDON HEAT POWER) (Item B2)

The Chair informed the meeting of the outcome of the first informal meeting in July, that it was informative, noting the contributions of the guests Dr Rembrandt and Jeremy Corbyn MP. The Chair welcomed the news that Islington Environment and Regeneration officers have agreed to work with Dr Rembrandt going forward.

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the informal working group is meeting virtually on Thursday September to consider how the council handles its waste and recycling. Members were advised that Cathy Cook of the North London Waste Authority has been invited and that members will be receiving presentations from officers.

490 Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2021/22) - PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT (Item B3)

Councillor Rowena Champion, Executive Member Environment and Transport was present for consideration of this item

During consideration of the report the following main points were raised –

Executive Member welcomed the reduction in road traffic collisions in the last year, which can be attributed to low traffic volumes during periods of lockdown.

In response to a question about street cleaning in and around parked cars on roads, the Corporate Director acknowledged that despite all the gadgetry and technology being provided to the operators, the only effective solution is temporary suspension of parking and road closures which will have to be done by providing residents with sufficient notice

On the issue of weeds on pavements, the Executive acknowledged that although it might have some positive contribution in terms of biodiversity, but they represent a

trip hazard to pedestrians and damage to pavement. The Council is looking at the use of herbicides in addressing weed on pavements.

A member suggested that posters produced by the Council's communication team in parks to discourage littering should be clearer.

On the request for more secure bicycle hangers and electric vehicle charging points, the officer advised that the Council is committed by spring 2022 to provide 400 bicycle hangers and 400 electric charging points.

In response to concerns about a possible future lockdown on GLL's business model and the Council's finances, the Corporate Director informed the meeting that surprisingly with lots of people were working from home GLL's customer's base has shifted to residents especially in the south of borough.

In addition, meeting was advised that according to GLL, business has returned to 70% of its previous level prior to lockdown and the Council is managing the risk effectively.

The Chair reminded the meeting that GLL will be attending the meeting in November.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for the report

491

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT - ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item B4)

Councillor Champion, Executive Member Environment and Transport, and Keith Townsend Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration were present for discussion of this item

During consideration of the item the following main points were made -

Executive Member noted that despite last year being difficult and challenging for everyone, it has been an opportunity for the Council to galvanise action in areas that may not have happened in previous years such as the LTN's and cycle paths

Meeting were informed of the 7 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods which covers about 23% of the borough, 35 school streets, majority of which were introduced during the Covid period and Pop up cycle lanes which were introduced in conjunction with neighbouring authorities such as Camden and Hackney

Executive Member acknowledged that lot of lessons were learnt during the implementation period and as the Council proceeds into the Consultation period most of which will be fed into any of the scheme that becomes permanent.

Meeting was informed that Bunhill 2 has now been commissioned which is good news in light of council aims of addressing fuel poverty

Council has proceeded with its Net Zero carbon programme and it is progressing well and although its planned engagement with stakeholders was hindered with the pandemic it is good to acknowledge the cross working partnership of all the council services

Members were informed that figures have been put together regarding the retrofitting of homes, acknowledging that although it will be an expensive exercise, the Council recognises its long term impact if not addressed soon

Islington Council acknowledges Cop26, and it will be hosting a climate festival which will be an opportunity to address climate change and its challenges

Executive Member reiterated a recent survey which states that 45 % of young people were experiencing anxiety regarding climate change and was hoping that the governments of all parties will address the young people concerns

Chair welcomed the Council's focus on retrofitting especially in light of the recent news of expected high energy bills and its cost on its residents

Member was concerned that despite Islington Council's efforts in addressing climate change, it is not being reimbursed by central government but being subjected to more cuts

In response to Air quality monitoring and lack of data, the Director for Climate Change informed members that monitoring takes place 6 months prior to the scheme being introduced and 12 months after it is implemented.

With regards the People friendly streets and its impact on boundary roads, the meeting was advised that in terms of traffic displacement, monitoring has not shown so far that there has been any noticeable impact on boundary roads either in terms of traffic volume or emissions.

In response to concerns about too many short journey's still be being carried out by cars, Executive Member acknowledged that some people will still need to use cars even for short journeys, however the Council will keep encouraging residents the benefits of using public transport and walking, introduce traffic reduction measures and putting in place the necessary essential infrastructure to support other means of transport

On the Council's Circular Economy Action plan and the levels of engagement with the various stakeholders, the Corporate Director advised that an internal quality review is ongoing, and that at this stage it is relatively limited in terms of external engagement, that at present it involves the various council services. Members were reminded that Islington is the only authority that is embarking on a circular economy action plan.

With regards the 19% increase in workload in the crematorium and cemetery, the Corporate Director acknowledged the effort and work of the team, that a capacity review was carried out during the pandemic which confirms that there is adequate capacity

Members were reminded that circular economy will be on the agenda for the November meeting

The Committee wanted to acknowledge the environment officers and the team for the remarkable work carried out over the last year especially keeping the services running despite the challenges that arose from the pandemic

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for their report updating the committee on their work over the last year

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

492 NET ZERO CARBON STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT (QUARTER 1) (Item B5)

Timi Ashaye, Interim Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme gave a presentation, with the following points highlighted

Meeting was advised that progress against the delivery of commitments in the Net Zero Carbon 2030 strategy will be reported on a quarterly basis not only for members of the Committee to scrutinise but it serves as an opportunity to report progress in a transparent manner and easily accessible to the community and ensures accountability to residents.

In terms of engagement and communications, meeting was advised that there is good progress in developing the requirements for the delivery of the Islington climate change festival which is due to take place in October 2021.

Officer informed members of the Council's Community Municipal Investment (CMI) proposals currently going through approval process, and hoping to launch the CMI on/around COP26 which allows residents to participate and invest in green initiatives via bonds and shares.

In addition, the Council has secured c.£3m of additional programme funding through the carbon offset fund and other external funding to support priority activity, including Green Home Grants Two funding to upgrade homes across the borough (approx £750k)

Council has also implemented the switch to renewable sources for 100% of electricity being used across its corporate buildings and that University of London has completed a first phase report which will assist the Council develop a road

map on how to achieve Net Zero Carbon with its existing housing stock, noting that stage 2 phase is now being developed on this issue.

Members were informed of the good progress on the new local plan with several key milestones achieved as part of the work to draft and adopt the new plan and importantly members were advised that the Council has developed its social value guidance in draft form to include integrating net zero objectives into the awarding of all contracts

On the issue of Transport, officer reminded meeting of the completed trials of seven Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) , the Enable Vehicle 2 Grid1 (V2G) - Honda supply chain which although severely disrupted by COVID and bi-directional chargers will not be installed until July 2021 before the full 12 month trial is to commence. The project is now expected to be completed by July 2022

A suggestion by a Member to incorporate percentage variances on the bar chart so that it will be easy to enable comparison between quarterly updates was noted Member welcomed the layout of the report, as it is easy to keep track of what is happening and importantly identify the ownership of the different workstreams.

In response to a question on whether officers are taking into consideration going forward the issue with regards to solar panels and conservation areas, the Corporate director acknowledged that in the short term that additional information is being provided via FAQ and new web content, however in the long run possibly next year with the Net Zero Carbon programme, supplementary planning documents will be addressing those issues.

On the issue of Citizens Assembly and public engagement, meeting was advised that scope has not been agreed, however exploratory discussions have taken place with senior councillors, officers and some organisations on this issue.

On whether a budget has been allocated specifically for the Citizen Assembly, the Corporate Director acknowledged that a substantial sum of money had been agreed for the festival in general by the Executive recently, but nothing at this stage had been allocated to the Assembly.

On how council measures the success of its engagement, the meeting was advised that this is presently work in progress as the Council is looking at a range of options

With regards the resumption of Cycleway 50, meeting was advised that this ceased as a result of covid, however with other schemes in the pipeline, this is being managed by TfL.

The Chair thanked Timi Ashaye for their presentation and for the updates on the progress of the Council's commitments to achieving its Net Zero Carbon Emissions

RESOLVED :

The presentation was noted

493 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 (Item B6)

The Chair reminded the meeting that GLL is scheduled for consideration at the next meeting in October.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

CHAIR