

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 23 January 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 23 January 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: Clarke (Chair), Heather (Vice-Chair), Jeapes, Craig, Gilgunn, Hayes, Zammit, Weekes and Jegorovas-Armstrong

Other Councillors: Champion

Councillor Tricia Clarke in the Chair

64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

None.

65 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None.

66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None.

67 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

A member proposed the following addition to the minutes, item 7: "A member of the committee noted the option for local residents to agree to manually weed their pavements instead of them being sprayed with pesticides.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them subject to the added comments above.

68 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The chair informed the Committee that the date for the working group had changed to Wednesday 25th January 2023, the theme of which was 'retrofitting and insulating our homes'. Professor Linda Clarke and Elaine Trimble from Cally Energy had attended and spoken about their work in this area.

The Chair explained the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill had a second reading in the House of Lords and the 11 recommendations were the outcome of the committee's investigation scrutinising the effects the reforms had on planning systems in London. The Committee was encouraged to send any comments and responses to the Chair.

Healthy Minds and Healthy Bods (HMHB) had launched London Health Walks, and started two new walks, in both Finsbury Park and Highbury Fields. They relaunched their

Islington/Hackney group and welcomed people to join on Thursday 16th February. They meet outside Highbury Grange Medical Practice (N5), leaving at 11am until 12.30pm.

69 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business changed so that item 9 was presented first.

70 EXTERNAL SPEAKERS (Item 6A)

The Chair thanked Dr Daniel Evans for attending and advised that he would present item 9

71 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

None.

73 UPDATE FROM DR DANIEL EVANS ON URBAN AGRICULTURE PROJECT (Item 9)

The Committee received a presentation from Dr Daniel Evans on his work on the Urban Agriculture Project. The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- The aim of the project was to integrate environmental, spatial, and social characteristics of a cluster of underutilized city spaces to determine how best to use these to support a local, circular, and sustainable food supply chain.
- In Islington the project focused on was Octopus Community Plant Nursery, Hollins and McCall Estate, Tufnell Park Road as this was an underutilised space
- The project aimed to map clusters of under-utilized sites at the 'ward' scale; to collect environmental, spatial and social information from each site; to build a model whereby this data was used to optimize and assign different food supply chain functions to each site, from composting and germinating seedlings to cultivation and food exchange and to build a user-friendly dashboard so that anyone (e.g. urban land planners) can input information about a cluster of sites and see the most optimum uses for each one.
- This was a heavily community-based project so as well as computing what was technically possible (with regards to Environmental and/or Spatial variables) the Dashboard results could have been weighted to account for preferences of the community, for example not wanting to use sites for composting.
- Councillors asked for further explanation on community engagement and expansion.
- Dr Evans explained that while the project ended in March, they had been keen to remain in Islington and expand the methods used to be able to update with new areas that may open.
- He also explained that it was important to the project to engage with all stakeholders and those that live around the area. They also wanted to do a series of pop-up workshops, so the community had been engaged at all stages. They had also been looking to find further funding to continue the project beyond March. As part of the project, they aim to provide the community with useful and proper information such as how to compost properly to catalyse interest and conversation surrounding this.
- The project would also improve biodiversity in the area as taking underutilised areas for growing means a 100% increase in biodiversity and through food initiatives this will engage the community in other aspects such as net zero carbon.
- One important aspect of the project that had created the dashboard was that anyone after can use it. It could be updated continuously and was easy to use.

Resolved

That the report be noted

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S NET ZERO CARBON 2030 STRATEGY, FOCUSING ON THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND GREEN JOBS (Item 8)

The Committee received a presentation from Will Umney, Team Leader for Transport Planning, on Net Zero Carbon Transport Workstream. The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- In compact cities, the effective local transport of people, products and materials was central to a circular economy, enabling local goods and material flows. This in turn supported smaller scale transport options for goods and effective local public transport options, reducing energy and resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality.
- Islington's transport networks made a significant contribution to the borough's CO2 emissions (116,000 tonnes in 2019) contributing towards climate change. The elimination of transport related emissions would support the achievement of the Council's goal of tackling climate change by achieving net zero carbon emissions in Islington by 2030.
- People targets and initiatives: to achieve 90% of all trips being taken by active and sustainable transport, a 4.6% reduction in private car ownership, a 9.2% increase in trips by public transport, and 93% of residents to live within 400m of the strategic cycle network.
- Goods targets and initiatives: to achieve a 10% reduction in freight traffic in the morning peak-time
- Materials and procurement: Reuse of materials, adopt a progressive procurement approach for investment into the public transport system to support local supply chains and leverage maximum social value.
- Last Mile Deliveries: Identify micro distribution hubs to provide space for local couriers for last mile deliveries; Promoting cargo bikes as a first choice alternative to vans for last mile deliveries; Increase Out of Home delivery options including parcel lockers.
- The Council wanted to enable employment growth and increased economic activity within the borough. It was, however, recognised that an economic development model built on perpetual growth presents significant challenges to the Council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 commitment and to the borough's transport system. The Council wanted to meet the twin challenges of building a fairer Islington and tackling climate change by building a green economy that will provide green, low carbon jobs, including the transport sector.
- Officers responded to concerns over e-bikes and cycle hire providers; explaining that the Council was trying to work with the providers to mitigate issues such as dumping of the bikes and irresponsible use. As well as looking at a pricing structure for these in which there would be an update in due course. Cllr Champion also explained that these types of bikes were a very well used service, but the concerns raised were very valid.
- Questions arose over the use of parcel lockers, including not wanting these to be at the expense of pavement space or an unused service. Councillors suggested that these should be installed in places where there was business interest or public buildings such as libraries, which could produce an income stream. Officers explained that concerns were already raised over loss of highway space and accessibility issues surrounding parcel lockers, but these would be placed in areas they were needed and did not cause a nuisance.
- Officers reiterated that driving had a huge impact on the environment, and therefore, the promotion of active travel and creating a physical environment was important in making the use of motor vehicles less attractive. Officers further explained that they

were developing an action plan on active travel to consider how unused parking spaces could be used.

- Councillors had concerns over the use of bike hangars. Officers explained there had been increased delivery of bike hangars which came with increased operational challenges. Software was being developed to aid this management to make it more seamless and if anyone saw an empty or unused bike hangar to contact them.
- Councillors explained their concerns over the last mile initiative and how this could cause increased noise pollution and only non-motored vehicles should be used for this such as McDonalds use of only bikes for deliveries locally as moped users had increasingly become irresponsible. In response officers explained that in Hackney the Amazon micro distribution hub used the building they already had so this had not created further noise pollution but would investigate the impact of these on residents. They were also trying to tackle bad behaviour of mopeds and that McDonalds exclusively using push bikes for deliveries had been successful.
- Councillor Champion lastly explained that the Council were trying to encourage research into the use of cargo bikes, which could hold up to 100kg, all over London.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

ACTIONS:

Officers to find out the percentage of bike hangars in use and update Councillors

74

Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2022/23) - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT (Item 10)

The Executive member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport presented this item.

The Executive Member asked for questions from the committee regarding the report published in the agenda. The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- There was a greater focus on housing estate recycling and how to make this easier, as currently, curb side properties performed better in this area. Officers were looking into the capacity issue as a key priority of as they were aware there was not always sufficient room for estate recycling.
- The Council was trying to encourage the Recycling Champions Programme, as well as increase the use of clothes banks to recycle unwanted clothing. Housing recycling was also a key priority in the short term as well as a push to spread correct and useful information on what can be recycled where.
- The Corporate Director of Environment explained that they wanted to have a briefing with Councillors to update them on what was happening with the Sobell Leisure Centre following recent flooding caused by a burst water main, and the progress of the insurance claim.
- The Executive Member and Corporate Director of Environment responded to questions from the public regarding Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE). They explained that staff shortages and increase in demand for the service had delayed reaching targets but that the recruitment drive had been positive, and more resources had been made available for SHINE.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

75

Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2022/23) - NET ZERO CARBON PROGRAMME **(Item 11)**

The Committee received a presentation from Sarah Hitchcock, Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme, on the Q2 Performance Report. The following key Points were raised in the discussion:

- Buildings, Housing, Commercial and Infrastructure: The UCL report had now been completed on housing stock; There had been a delay in some works due to procurement issues, but this was moving forward and has had a lot of resident engagement; grant fund application for Bevin Court pilot expected to be submitted (up to 50% match funding, with funding to be drawn down by March 2025) and other pilot projects were progressing.
- Transport: all deliverables on track
- Sustainable and Affordable Energy: all deliverables on track; GreenSCIES Phase 2 was now underway. Specialist input had been procured to facilitate the final design development and outline business case preparations. Timescales would be updated in due course. Solar PV was to be delivered to 5 corporate buildings this financial year
- Green Economy: most deliverables on track; ongoing work on mapping skills; the requirement for Net Zero Carbon had been added to Islington Council's Affordable Workspace Specification document along with references to planning guidelines. This would be shared with all developers at pre app stage and appended to the S106 agreement. This would be for all S106 from this point onwards; £2.7 million pounds awarded under the strategic development fund
- Natural Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling: majority of deliverables on track; private tree planting initiative was delayed due to recruitment issues; a lot of successes in fundraising; 230 entries for Islington in bloom; flats above shops food waste trial launched.
- Planning: delays in adoption of local plan; new officer to take forward the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- Engaging, Empowering and Partnering: focus on stakeholder engagement over the next quarter; Staffing changes have delayed commissioning of Council led events. NZC Team and comms had supported community led events including Car Free Day (which they were linking to play streets and the Islington Environmental Emergency Alliance event at Union Chapel); comms plan had stalled over summer, but an agency was now helping; launched the net zero carbon champions.
- Finance and Investment: working closely with other London boroughs, the green finance initiative and 3Ci.

Officers gave clarification to the Committee on some points raised:

- Campaigns for increasing waste recycling included pulling together a series of activities for March and engagement workshops to explore the barriers to recycling. As well as looking at behaviour change programmes and getting officers in post to help with this.
- The next wave of de-carbonisation funding was not live yet, there had been technical challenges but had been successful in getting applications in and now waiting for the next round of funding.
- Officers indicated they would send the latest update on the future of the Bright Sparks re-use and repair project once they had received this.
- Officers confirmed they would check technical details surrounding questions regarding the decarbonisation of the pension fund.

Resolved

That the report be noted

ACTIONS

Officers to provide further information to the committee surrounding the Bright Sparks reuse and repair project;

Officers to provide further information to the committee on the decarbonisation of the Pensions Fund.

76 WORK PLAN (Item 12)

Resolved

That the committee noted the work plan

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

CHAIR