

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 20 February 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 20 February 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors: Clarke (Chair), Heather (Vice-Chair), Jeapes, Hayes and Jegorovas-Armstrong and Jackson
Present: Other: Councillor Champion.

77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies received from Councillors Craig, Gilgunn, Weekes, Zammit and Nargund (as substitute)

78 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

Councillor Jackson as substitute member

79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None.

80 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

Under Item 5, Chair's Report amended to "The Chair of the London Assembly's Planning and Regeneration Committee 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."

Under Item 5, Chair's Report - To note that the Informal Working Group suggested Officers worked with Professor Linda Clarke and engaged with Cally Energy

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them subject to the amendments above.

81 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair reminded the committee that 18th April 2023 was the date of the special scrutiny committee meeting on the climate emergency, to which stakeholders in the Borough were invited.

The Chair asked Committee Members to inform her if there were any further groups that should be invited.

82 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

Councillor Bell-Bradford, Executive member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs, presented item 10, Q3 Performance Report - Employment and skills first.

83 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

Public questions to be taken after each agenda item

Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2022/23) – EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS (Item 10)

The Executive member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs presented this item. Cllr Bell-Bradford invited questions on the report per the Agenda.

Key Points in the discussion were raised, as follows:

- The Executive Member explained that sub targets were ambitious, and they may be under on some of these but there was an upwards increase and targets were slowly being reached. He explained that on some targets it was difficult to get certain information, such as ages of residents.
- Councillors asked what the Council was doing surrounding national apprenticeship week and for apprenticeship schemes in the Borough. The Executive Member explained that whilst Council championed apprenticeships year-round, there were a number of events being hosted during apprenticeship week that had good engagement. Improvements were still needed to produce a more systematic approach to capture information as well as working more closely with colleges and London Metropolitan University.
- Furthermore, work was being undertaken by HR to discover what apprenticeships could be available and the demographic that were seeking these. Level 2 apprenticeships availability had decreased and collaboration with colleges was needed. The Executive Member further explained that the Council were looking at how they can better support parents and applicants on the application process. There were tensions between whether the Council should prioritise education or apprenticeships.
- Keith Townsend, Corporate Director Environment and Climate Change, responded to queries on the Bright Sparks scheme, explaining that the Council were looking to continue to redevelop Bright Sparks and the opportunities this had provided to develop skills.
- Caroline Wilson, Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs, and the Executive Member responded to concerns over affordable working spaces. Charges were substantially below market rate. They had just completed the monthly return with Fashion Enter and it had been positive, and the financial position had started to stabilise. The Executive Member said he would circulate a report on affordable workspaces in the borough.
- There was a research project underway with London Met University involving qualitative and quantitative elements on ongoing pressures on health provisions which was being evaluated and would be brought back to committee.
- Caroline Wilson said she would bring information on UCL Shared Knowledge back to the committee.
- The Executive Member responded to concerns over the Cost-of-Living Crisis effects on businesses in Islington. Islington were working with the London Boroughs of Camden and Hackney on the central activity zone. There were still issues from Covid effecting businesses such as many more people working from home particularly on Monday and Friday's where businesses had seen a decrease in footfall. The Executive Member would circulate more statistics on how Islington compared to other boroughs in this area.
- KPI's had previously not been good enough so more had been added to allow better tracking of targets.
- Further information on green jobs available would be brought back to committee.
- The Executive Member responded to concerns on increased funding due to scheme expansions, ensuring that any not so far used would be allocated to the right places and not wasted

ACTIONS:

Officers to provide update on Bright Sparks to the committee.

The Executive member to circulate a report on affordable workspaces in the borough

Officers to provide information on London Met University Research Project.

Officers to bring information on UCL Shared Knowledge back to the committee.

The Executive Member to Circulate information on the effects of the Cost-of-Living crisis to Islington Businesses.

The Executive Member to circulate information on green jobs available.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

85

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY PRESENTATION (Item 8)

The committee received a presentation from Martin Capstick, Managing Director of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) on the NLWA Progress Update. The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- Islington was the smallest borough of the NLWA in size and waste disposal.
- From a Green Peace survey, it was found North London residents were using 46 million pieces of plastic a week. The NLWA were investigating how to raise further awareness of this.
- London Energy were making large profits from the electricity generated from incinerated waste, this was going to the public sector, and they wanted to allow boroughs to use this money.
- Infrastructural issues occurred with compulsory food waste collection from 2025.
- The new NLWA facility had allowed for a separate space and air control for furniture that cannot be recycled due to chemicals in it. This had negated issues of contamination so all other waste could be recycled and disposed of correctly.
- The NLWA were keen to highlight to Government that more can be done to reach sustainable outcomes. Progress on single use plastics while slow does highlight this can be done.
- Due to levelling up policy and the treasury it was likely North London will lose £20 million in taxes on energy.
- The NLWA were engaging with other emitters who were seeing carbon capture as part of future plans to help find a solution for London as a whole. Members had previously approved awarding of contract of advisors to investigate technical solution for a planning application to install carbon capture equipment.
- Over concerns of increases in waste criminals, Martin reassured all waste was managed under contract with major companies and they traced the end disposal route, so it had gone to the correct place.
- Concerns arose over food waste, in which the NLWA gave example of trails in Hackney that gave residents of above shop flats/estates/flat blocks a key fob to access bins, so passers-by could not misuse these. As well as a view to have more public open bins to reduce misuse of food waste bins. The NLWA were working on a campaign to raise high level awareness of general ways to properly dispose of food waste as opposed to niche topics that could confuse the public. They aimed to make things clearer and easier to understand.
- Mr Capstick assured the workforce on site target was 25% and employment within this had included specialist roles and they had been working to build skills and use apprentices. They aimed to be more proactive at helping Islington residents with apprenticeship opportunities and advertising this more widely across North London, not just Enfield.

- Mr Capstick explained that the fatality of a NLWA worker had led to reviews of all areas of work and stronger risk assessments, a report was being produced into the events that occurred and lessons learned from this.
- There had been a lack of support from Government on initiatives to reduce waste such as 'save our stuff'. While the Local Authority were trying to drive reuse and recycle schemes a better framework from the Government was needed for this to happen.
- Mr Capstick explained it was difficult for waste disposal and recycling plants to be 100% publicly owned due to the way in which facilities had evolved and the specialist equipment used. Companies such as Biffa had a monopoly on this and due to strong market connections got better value for money than would be possible for an individual authority.
- From queries arising from the public, Mr Capstick explained a joint waste strategy was being worked on, but they still were waiting for a conclusion on government reforms. It was not commercially viable to implement advanced sorting of recycled materials, this still would not result in net zero carbon. He further explained incineration and carbon capture were the lowest net carbon way to deal with waste. Wrapping plastic was a difficult waste product to process, as plastics such as sweet wrappers were made up of multiple materials which got mixed and produced lower quality recyclates. Finally, it was explained that the slogan on London Energy Vehicles was not an incentive to encourage waste but more to advertise incineration methods could help produce energy and electricity.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

86

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF NET ZERO CARBON - CONCLUDING DISCUSSION.
(Item 9)

The Committee were invited to discuss their thoughts and conclusions on the scrutiny review, with a view for the draft recommendations to be brought to the March Meeting. The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- A campaign to national government on the climate emergency was needed urgently.
- Looking at best ways to deal with residual waste, through incineration or other means, it needed to be the most environmentally friendly option. There needed to be government intervention to reduce single use plastic usage which would drastically reduce waste produced that needed to be incinerated.
- An expansion on retrofitting and further training for officers in house, to help reduce costs and produce more green jobs.
- Working with community energy schemes with a view in the future to possibly buy council owned solar panels.

Councillors were asked to send any further thoughts to the Chair.

ACTION:

Clerk to collate ideas of draft recommendations and send to the chair and officers.

RESOLVED:

That the discussion be noted

87 **WORKPLAN 2022/23 AND RESPONSE TRACKER (Item 11)**

It was requested that Officers invite 'Better'/GLL to March scrutiny meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the work plan and the response tracker be circulated once complete.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

CHAIR