

# Scrutiny Review of Net Zero Carbon 2030 - Circular Economy and Green Jobs

## REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**London Borough of Islington**

**17 October 2023**

## **FOREWORD**

Islington Council declared a climate emergency on 27 June 2019, committing the council to working towards making Islington net zero carbon by 2030. Carbon emissions for Islington as a borough were 679,589 tonnes, representing a reduction of 42% since 2005 (BEIS – 2018). However, the council has direct control over only 4% of those carbon emissions, with indirect responsibility for another 5% as a landlord to c. 25,000 properties. A 10-year Net Zero Carbon Strategy, 'Vision 2030: Building a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030' was adopted by Executive in November 2020. Through this strategy, the council made a wide range of commitments focused on addressing the climate emergency.

However, the Council faces several challenges that present significant risks in responding to the climate emergency. According to climate risk modelling by Mayor of London and Bloomberg, Islington is amongst six boroughs at particularly high risk from the effects of climate change. Continued government austerity and limited funding, and a lack of supportive national policy, provides real challenges and threatens to undermine the progress made towards the Net Zero ambition.

The Government's main climate change policy document is the Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Greener) which was published on 19 October 2021 (updated April 2022). It set out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the Government's net zero target by 2050. While this presents opportunities for innovation, it is vital that local services transform in a way that is resident-focused and best meets the needs of Islington's diverse communities. Services must be delivered in a way which not only reduces the environmental impact of the council's activities, but reduces inequalities, is focused on early intervention and prevention, and committed to regenerating the borough in a way that will benefit residents.

The Committee wished to review how the Council was taking the lead on encouraging sustainable development, developing policies to encourage sustainable economic development, and working to identify ways to support a circular economy in our borough with residents and businesses, to help achieve this goal.

The review sought to look at the five Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair. In light of this, the Committee has agreed eight recommendations that seek to further develop the council's work in achieving the net zero carbon ambition.

**Cllr Tricia Clarke**  
**Chair of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Aim:**

To review how the Council is taking the lead on encouraging sustainable development, developing policies to encourage sustainable economic development, and working to identify ways to support a circular economy in our borough with residents and businesses, to help achieve this goal. The review will look at the five Rs, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair.

### **Evidence:**

The Committee commenced the review in September 2022. The Council considered evidence from a number of witnesses, as follows:

- Evidence from Council Officers
  - Presentation on the Circular Economy Action Plan – Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme
  - Presentation on Green Economy and Planning – Director of Planning, and Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs
  - Presentation on Council Housing and Buildings – Director of Housing Property Services
  - Presentation on the Natural Environment – Head of Greenspace and Leisure
  - Presentation on the Transport Workstream - Team Leader for Transport Planning
- Evidence from External speakers
  - Dr Daniel Evans – Urban Agriculture Project
  - Elaine Trimble – Cally Energy
  - Professor Linda Clarke – University of Westminster

### **Summary of Main Findings:**

Over the course of the municipal year, the Committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses and council officers on the challenges facing the circular economy in Islington.

The Committee considered the Circular Economy Action Plan, scrutinising the plans to develop a local economy that eliminates waste and pollution, circulates products and materials, and regenerates nature. The Committee reviewed the emerging work to develop a local economy based around green jobs and considered how this would benefit the environment, local people, and local businesses by supporting new highly-skilled jobs. It would be crucial to engage with local partners, businesses and residents in achieving this aim.

The Committee reviewed the challenges associated with implementing a circular economy approach in the council's housing services, but noted opportunities to reuse and recycle materials and promote environmental practices through retrofitting, construction and building management. The Committee welcomed the work to maximise the borough's green spaces, supporting biodiversity and resident engagement with the natural environment. Local food growing projects have a number of environmental and social benefits and the Committee welcomed work to develop these further.

The Committee also considered the importance of active travel, and supported initiatives such as transforming Last Mile Deliveries through the use of cargo bikes, which would reduce vehicle

movements and carbon emissions in the borough. The Committee noted the importance of air quality and is mindful of the health and environmental risks associated with air pollution.

The Committee has made 8 recommendations focused on supporting the local circular economy, reducing waste and encouraging recycling, developing new green jobs, improving biodiversity and supporting local environmental initiatives such as retrofitting and community energy schemes. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Encourage the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) to support Islington Council in our reduce, reuse and recycle ambitions through their new Waste Strategy and:
    - (i) Maximise the opportunities for new Islington-based apprenticeships as a consequence of their future strategy and developments.
    - (ii) review and understand the performance of London Energy and other contractors.
    - (iii) continue to focus on waste reduction and recycling to maximise diversion of waste from incineration.
    - (iv) bring forward carbon capture at the Edmonton ERF.
  2. Work to support residents in making sustainable choices and reducing waste by:
    - (i) Exploring options for design improvements and resident information to drive behaviour change and support an increase in effective/compliant food and other recycling on estates.
    - (ii) maximising opportunities for local food growing and food supply, organic practices, prevention of food waste and effective food recycling.
    - (iii) Work with NLWA and other partners, for example, on campaigns to promote reusable rather than disposable products (e.g. reusable nappies and sanitary products), and the waste disposal of such products.
  3. Work with London Councils to lobby government for greater regulatory powers, particularly on waste and supermarkets and retail bodies to increase their recycling provision for customers.
  4. Focus on how the council can facilitate the development of local retrofitting skills. Explore how the council can build inhouse capacity for retrofitting, for example through developing and training its own accredited retrofit assessors and co-ordinators
  5. Investigate options to relaunch a resident-led 'pesticide free streets' scheme and continue to develop a plan to reduce the use of glyphosate in council operations
  6. Review best practice to help the council support and enable community energy schemes in the borough to support the overall buildings retrofit programme.
  7. Develop options for increasing last-mile deliveries by businesses using vehicles that minimise pollution by using cargo-bikes, etc. and that do not lead to nuisance to residents from delivery depots, micro-kitchens, etc.
  8. Investigate how we can use air quality monitoring and reporting as part of our performance reporting and promotion of net zero carbon ambitions.
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Committee commenced the review on 6 September 2022, with the overall aim to review how the Council is taking the lead on encouraging sustainable development, developing policies to encourage sustainable economic development, and working to identify ways to support a circular economy in our borough with residents and businesses, to help achieve this goal. The review will look at the five Rs, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair.
- 1.2 The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:
1. Understand the impact the Circular Economy Action Plan is having on the Net Zero Carbon 2030 goal.
  2. To examine what members, residents and local businesses can do to support a Circular Economy in Islington, and to review how this can be best communicated.
  3. To make suggestions to feed into the upcoming Circular Economy Action Plan
  4. To assess the impact of the council's development and economic development policies to ensure they are championing sustainable approaches.
  5. To consider how all council services can contribute to the circular economy.

## **2. Main Findings**

- 2.1 This report summarises the Committee's review of Net Zero Carbon 2030 - Circular Economy.
- 2.2 In a series of meetings from July 2022 to February 2023, the committee deliberated on strategies to advance the circular economy and promote sustainability within the borough. Key highlights from these meetings include discussions on embedding green and circular economy principles into local strategies, fostering innovation, and encouraging social value. The council emphasised collaboration with construction industries, upskilling programs, and engagement with housing associations and residents to drive sustainable practices. Achievements and targets were outlined, along with the challenges of obtaining funding and addressing retrofitting needs in the council's housing stock.
- 2.3 Another focal point was the commitment to greening initiatives and biodiversity enhancement. The Council aimed to increase tree planting, promote food growing in communities, and create new green spaces. The Council highlighted its achievements in these areas, along with the need to upskill the workforce for green jobs. Moreover, the meetings discussed strategies to integrate circular economy principles into the transport sector, emphasising active and sustainable transport options, reducing emissions, and promoting green jobs. Lastly, the committee addressed the Urban Agriculture Project, which seeks to encourage sustainable, circular food supply chains in urban areas, fostering community engagement and biodiversity improvement.
- 2.4 In summary, these meetings reflected Islington's dedication to sustainability, circular economy practices, and green job creation. The council explored various avenues, including housing retrofitting, green transport, and urban agriculture, all aimed at reducing environmental impact while enhancing the well-being of its residents.

### 3. 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022 meeting – Circular Economy

3.1 This meeting considered an introductory presentation from the Head of the Net Zero Carbon Programme and Corporate Director for Environment focused on the council's Circular Economy Action Plan. The Committee noted that a circular economy is an alternative to a linear 'take, make, dispose' economy and is based on three principles: eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials, and regenerate nature. The Committee considered the circular economy model and examples of interventions at each point in the cycle:

1. Rethink and reduce e.g. Library of things
2. Redesign e.g. New homes design guide
3. Repair & remanufacture e.g. Repair cafes
4. Reuse e.g. Dress for success
5. Recycle e.g. Bulky item recycling
6. Recover e.g. Energy from waste (last resort)

3.2 The council's Circular Economy Action Plan was developed to explore possibilities for developing a circular economy in Islington, and sets out how the council will apply circular economy principles to its policies and strategies, alongside a number of actions. Actions detailed in the plan included the following:

<b>We have</b>	<b>We will</b>
Included circular economy requirements and KPIs focusing on refurbishment, flexibility of use, and recycling of waste material in the New Homes Guide.	Manage council assets based on longevity and flexible use, community benefit and sustainable refurbishment where required.
Retrofitted our first refuse collection vehicle, with a second on order	Retrofit 8 refuse collection vehicles over two years
Provide support for car clubs and cargo bikes	Reduce our overall fleet size, move to electric and retrofit where possible.
Reuse material in our road maintenance programme	Work with partners to raise awareness of the circular economy and share best practice
Delivered Bunhill 2 heat and power networks and are developing greenSCIES	Celebrate circular economy achievements at our islington sustainability awards
Delivered various reuse and waste minimisation initiatives	Investigate reusing more material more locally from our reuse and recycling centre
Managed digital infrastructure on circular economy principles (cloud services, leasing, reuse)	Investigate supporting more library of things, marketplaces and other sharing initiatives
Opened our first library of things	Support repair services directly and through communications and improving access and visibility
Required circular economy statements for large planning applications	Incorporate circular economy principles in a new food strategy
Launched a circular economy grant scheme for SMEs	Develop a progressive procurement policy to include specific circular economy requirements such as 'products as services'.
	The inclusive economy team will support SMEs aiming to be more 'circular'

3.3 Officers advised that next steps would include developing new initiatives, raising awareness of circular economy principles both internally and externally, and monitoring progress.

Performance indicators were in development. It was advised that a new and updated Circular Economy Action Plan would be published by April 2024.

- 3.4 Officers had carried out some benchmarking and advised that Islington's carbon footprint was not an outlier in comparison to other London Boroughs, and was smaller than many due to Islington being a relatively smaller borough in terms of size and population.
- 3.5 Members questioned officers on how circular economy principles could be developed further. It was advised that the Waste Team were looking to grow the 'Library of Things' project, with more items and more hubs across the borough, however the council would need to consider cost and affordability. It was also noted that work was underway to understand the feasibility of developing more heat networks, and officers were considering how to engage more with schools to support them in lowering their carbon footprint.

#### **4. 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 meeting – Green Jobs and Planning**

- 4.1 This session was used to provide an overview of the green economy and planning and the future plans for how to embed the circular economy initiatives into council work.
- 4.2 The Director of Planning, Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs, and Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs was present for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee.
- 4.3 A green economy will reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It aims for long term development that is environmentally friendly while also promoting health, wealth, and well-being for all people. In London, the number of green jobs is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years, to 335,000 by 2030 and 732,000 by 2050.
- 4.4 The Committee considered the emerging vision for Islington's Green Economy. Objectives would include maximizing the opportunities associated with a new green economy, ensuring the local labour market is appropriately skilled and resilient, and local people are able to access secure and well paid sustainable jobs. Early actions included partnering with the Mayoral Green Construction Skills Academy, working with Housing Repairs to develop a pipeline of local employment opportunities in retrofitting, considering opportunities to ensure green practices in demolition and construction through Section 106 agreements, and supporting a number of initiatives working with local businesses to around greening highstreets.
- 4.5 The following actions were highlighted in the discussion:
- The council will embed green/circular economy initiatives into our Local Economy Strategies across the borough, ensuring it is effectively promoted and local people and business can benefit at a local level.
  - The council will develop the specification for a 'net zero' and circular economy focused affordable workspace.
  - The council will develop Green Social Value guidance including circular economy asks for integration into council commissioning and procurement processes.
  - The council will encourage potential suppliers to work together with us on achieving best practice and innovation in the application of circular economy in achieving social value.



- The council will identify where procurement of targeted high spends and high embedded carbon items can be focused on circular economy principles, such as leasing rather than purchasing.
- The council will promote green practices as part of the implementation of the Chapel Market regeneration programme e.g. food waste; circular economy products; sustainable deliveries.
- The council will convene a meeting with CITB to hear directly from construction industry on challenges faced, and what council/s can do to help.
- The council will work with Corporate HR and trades unions to promote the benefits of upskilling and keeping abreast of new green skills.
- The council will develop business case to fund programme similar to ReLondon and circular economy to empower Islington residents and businesses to adopt circular economy practices, targeting under-represented entrepreneurs.
- The council will continue to work with Islington Sustainability Network (formerly ISEP) to raise awareness of the circular economy, to share best practice from around Islington and to increase membership amongst the Islington business community.
- The council will create a joint skills plan with local education and skills providers to outline the opportunities and gaps in green skills and jobs and identify the different needs of various sectors in the borough and recommend tailored approaches to strengthening green skills and jobs in these areas.

4.6 The Committee also received questions and comments from the public and members of the committee.

- On the anchor institutions the council are currently working with, organisations like Arsenal Football Club, Whittington Hospital and local colleges play a large role in the circular economy and have the biggest potential to make the biggest difference. A task and finish group of these institutions has been set up to look at Net Zero Carbon.
- On adult education, the council is offering many courses, via our partners in education, that are within the circular economy that can skill up adults looking to take on new vocations. Courses like bicycle repair and textiles are important, but also courses on English as a second language can be vital for community wealth building.
- On working with larger employers based within Islington, the council is doing a lot of work to educate residents on how to pass on the plastic waste back to the business. This has worked well with the local markets in Islington, where residents are using more paper bags or reusable items and these initiatives should be levelled up to larger businesses.
- On reusing building materials on brownfield sites, this will vary from site to site, based on what the is agreed for the materials for sites. But often, applications need to state what materials they are using, and the impact on the environment. Currently lots of sites are not just reusing materials, but reuse parts of the old structure, and incorporate it into the new design.
- On the Holloway Prison development, it is a council agreement to use residents and local supply chains for developments, but the Holloway Prison development has specific arrangements to ensure that local businesses are also involved in the events space on the site.

## **5. 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 meeting – Council Housing and Buildings**

- 5.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Housing and Property Services, outlining the scrutiny review of council buildings and homes and how these can provide green jobs and embed circular economy practices in the processes of providing council buildings and homes.
- 5.2 The Council was working to deliver a new build scheme to Passivhaus level performance and intended to incorporate this methodology and best practice into the new build programme. Officers would also work with housing associations, landlords, tenants and owner occupiers to increase awareness of the energy efficiency measures available. The council also planned to replace gas boilers in council buildings with low carbon energy heating sources or connections to heat networks, and improve energy efficiency through insulation, solar technology, and lighting replacements.
- 5.3 It was highlighted that it was difficult to embed circular economy principles into this workstream due to quality standards, however officers were reviewing opportunities for reuse and recycling through the new build scheme and capital works. The council would also seek to reduce carbon emissions in construction work and include circular economy principles in procurement.
- 5.4 The following key points were made in the discussion:
- There was a need to seek funding to support the delivery of green jobs. Three grants had been applied for to date and any opportunity that arises to apply for a grant or bid was taken.
  - There were schemes looking at heat networks across the board, including cross borough boundary heat networks. Officers advised there was a collaborative project currently with all North London boroughs to see if it was possible to connect heat networks using the NLWA. There had also been talks with the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy and the GLA to support funding.
  - There were not currently plans to offer grants to landlords for retrofitting schemes but the council could signpost available government grants and launch an accredited supply list of local traders and builders.
  - All council properties were being considered for retrofitting and feasibility studies were being undertaken.

## **6. 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – Natural Environment workstream**

- 6.1 The Committee received a presentation on the Natural Environment from the Head of Greenspace and Leisure Services and in particular how it fits into the Circular Economy and Green Jobs.
- 6.2 Key points raised in the presentation and discussion included:
- The Council aims to develop and deliver a programme to support greening initiatives across the borough, and this would include delivering in line with the Vision 2030 Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.
  - The Council has delivered the Islington Greener Together Programme with some first schemes evident on the ground and council is now aiming to deliver its tree planting programme. The Greener Together programme will also include

delivering projects with Housing and Highways and development of a pocket park framework.

- With regards to tree canopy cover, the Council will increase tree planting and there are plans to combat drought impact through adaptations.
- To support biodiversity and engagement with nature, the council aims to increase food growing in communities and promote the benefits of green spaces.
- Officers highlighted a number of Green Space targets which include a 26% canopy cover by 2025, and 27% by 2030 which is quite high comparable to neighbouring authorities considering the borough's size and dense nature of the borough. The council aims to replace every tree lost by delivering an overall net gain of at least 600 trees every year by 2026 and provide 1000sqm of new green space by 2026.
- The Committee welcomed achievements in this area, including 38 approved Greener Together projects, the receipt of external funding to accelerate urban greening, the planting of 701 trees in 2021/22, and grant funding for a Tree Officer post has been received to engage with residents on identifying locations for trees and therefore increasing the capacity of the team. A tree donation process would also be launched with Trees for Streets.
- The Council had exceeded its target of 250m squared additional habitat space for wildlife in parks and 13,000 volunteer hours in parks. It was commented that the volunteer sessions allowed young people to engage with nature. Other projects to support biodiversity included Islington in Bloom, the Islam Nature Walk, and the Big Cities Butterfly Workshop.
- Risks to the Greener Together programme included a lack of capacity for consistent engagement with communities and inability to build trust and lack of potential maintenance budget sources for new green infrastructure.
- Risks identified within the Park Services included the potential lack of support from the local community to leave areas of green space wild so as to improve biodiversity. It was also commented that there is a lack of maintenance capacity for new green infrastructure which needs to be addressed.
- Risks within the Tree Service include seeking funds to buy, plant and maintain the number of trees required for the canopy cover and tree number targets and also finding enough space to plant the additional trees on public land.
- The service is embedding circular economy principles by working with community partners and Friends Of groups to create more food growing opportunities in our parks, estates and in peoples own gardens.
- Although all green waste collected in the borough is recycled and used to create compost, the service is looking to develop more local compost facilities. The service has moved away from traditional bedding displays to a model of reusable plans. In addition, The Service has been able to decarbonise its fleet of vehicles for example by moving away from diesel machinery to electric controlled units. The Service also promotes urban cultivate project creating new clusters of space for urban agriculture using left over open space.
- In terms of green jobs and upskilled green workforce, the committee was advised of its apprenticeship scheme that created a pipeline for new staff. The service currently had 8 apprentices.
- The Council is also developing new green skill jobs such as solar panel installers, heat pump specialists and renewable energy engineers by working in partnership with the Parks for London Green Skills Hub to develop employment pathways and training programmes to meet the current and future needs of the industry.

- Officers commented that the upskilling of local residents and the workforce was vital. There was a shortage of the skills needed to perform new green jobs, and there needed to be clear pathways into the industry for young people.
- The service was considering using social value in procurement to deliver upskilling initiatives, including providing volunteering opportunities for local people where they will begin to learn new skills.
- The reduction in pesticide use across the borough was reiterated. In general, glyphosate was no longer used in Islington parks and open spaces and only used in limited places to treat invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.
- On the issue of composting, the meeting was informed that presently this material is processed out of the borough. It was thought that composting locally would be preferential, however more would need to be done to support this in housing estates and gardens.
- A member reiterated the need for Council to promote its greening projects and opportunities to engage with the natural environment.
- It was suggested that there may be an inadequate number of green champions for the 38 projects in place. In response, it was stated that the ambition was to have more champions with future schemes.

## **7. 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 meeting –Transport Workstream**

- 7.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Team Leader for Transport Planning, explaining how the service can embed the circular economy into their workstreams.
- 7.2 The following main points were noted 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. The Executive Member 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-motorised 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.
- The Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport explained that the Council was trying to encourage research into the use of cargo bikes, which could hold up to 100kg, all over London.

## **8. 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 meeting – Evidence from Dr Daniel Evans on the Urban Agriculture Project**

- 8.1 This was an opportunity for committee members to receive an update from Dr Evans on urban agriculture and how this encourages residents to cultivate their own food/crops in urban areas to create a more sustainable and circular food supply chain.
- 8.2 The following points were raised in the presentation:

- 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 was that the team had created the dashboard so that anyone after can use it. It could be updated continuously and was easy to use.

## **9. 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 – Working Group focussing on retrofitting and insulating council homes**

9.1 The Committee held an informal working group and received presentations from Elaine Trimble from Cally Energy and Professor Linda Clarke from the University of Westminster. The working group focused on how to reduce energy costs in council buildings and how the Council the process of retrofitting more sustainable and circular to help Islington residents.

### **9.2 Cally Energy - *presentation by Elaine Trimble.***

The Aim of Cally Energy was to crowdsource funding for solar PV cells for two local sites: Cally Pool, with an estimated saving of 11 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, and Thornhill Primary, with an estimated saving of 9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

The following key points were raised in the discussion:

- Cally Energy was created by a group of residents that wanted to create positive energy change and engage residents in a not-for-profit venture. There were currently around 50 members.
- Challenges faced included developing relationships within the council, finding suitable sites, concerns over end ownership of PV cells, and how to make sure residents' benefit from their programmes. As energy payments are equalised across the borough in an effort to be fair, it means that residents who have an array on their building would not financially benefit in terms of a cost reduction. The win will be in the community energy neighbourhood fund, but that requires finding roofs of sufficient size.

### 9.3 **Retrofitting Presentation from Professor Linda Clarke**

The presentation highlighted the need for expertise in implementing retrofitting schemes. There was a skills shortage, a recruitment crisis, and a fractured market. It was thought that transformation of the labour process was required through better recognised training programmes, revised qualification profiles, and better opportunities for career progression. Local authorities had a role to play in promoting good practice through the maintenance of their social housing stock, their procurement activity and relationships with contractors, and their direct employment of staff.

Retrofitting was imperative for addressing climate change, would help with the energy and cost of living crises, and would help to tackle fuel poverty. It was suggested that establishing an Islington Retrofitting taskforce and DLO would be options for further developing local retrofitting activity.

Officers explained how the Council is supporting retrofitting in the borough and summarised the challenges, including the available budgets, an old and inefficient housing stock, the requirement to seek planning permission for changes, and the inability to make internal changes to leasehold properties. The council supported the training and development of staff and officers noted the significant investment needed to develop new training programmes.

## 10. **20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 – Scrutiny Review Concluding Discussion.**

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 In conclusion, Islington's ongoing commitment to sustainable practices and the circular economy demonstrates its proactive approach to addressing pressing environmental challenges. Through a series of well-informed meetings, the council has laid out a comprehensive roadmap for integrating green initiatives, fostering innovation, and encouraging social responsibility within the borough. These discussions reflect an earnest desire to create a more environmentally friendly and economically robust community.
- 11.2 Furthermore, the emphasis on upskilling the local workforce and promoting green jobs underscores the council's dedication to building a greener, more sustainable economy that benefits its residents and businesses alike. Islington's efforts in greening initiatives, biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable transport align with a broader vision of creating a healthier, more resilient urban environment.
- 11.3 As Islington continues to push for change and sustainability, it sets an example for other communities looking to address climate change and environmental risks while simultaneously building a thriving circular economy that benefits both present and future generations.
- 11.4 The Committee would like to thank witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny review. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.



## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2022/23**

### **Councillors:**

Councillor Tricia Clarke (Chair)  
Councillor Gary Heather (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Angelo Weekes  
Councillor Claire Zammit  
Councillor Clare Jeapes  
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong  
Councillor Fin Craig  
Councillor Mick Gilgunn  
Councillor Ruth Hayes

### **Substitute Members:**

Councillor Caroline Russell  
Councillor Jason Jackson  
Councillor Praful Nargund

### **Other Councillors:**

Councillor Bell-Bradford  
Councillor Champion  
Councillor Khondoker

### **Officer Support:**

Emma Taylor and Thomas French – Democratic Services  
Andrew Bedford - Head of Greenspace and Leisure;  
Caroline Wilson – Director of Inclusive Economy and Jobs  
David Hardiman – Assistant Director Communications  
Eshwyn Prabhu - Interim Head of Strategic Transport;  
Hayley Sims – Strategic Lead for Policy and Equality  
James Wilson – Energy Sustainability & Consulting Manager  
Karen Sullivan – Director of Planning  
Kaya Chatterji – Head of Local Economies  
Keith Townsend – Corporate Director for Environment and Regeneration  
Lynn Stratton – Communications  
Martijn Cooijmans - Director of Climate Change and Transport;  
Matthew Homer – Street Scene Strategy Manager  
Matt West – Director of Housing and Property Services  
Richard Gill – Energy Projects & Programmes Officer  
Richard Martin – Net Zero Carbon Strategic Business Manager  
Ronan Murray – Net Zero Carbon Officer  
Sakiba Gurda – Head of Planning Policy  
Sarah Hitchcock – Head of Net Zero Carbon  
Will Umney – Team Leader Transport Planning

<b>SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)</b>
<b>Title of review: Net Zero Carbon 2030- Circular Economy</b>
<b>Scrutiny Committee: Environment and Regeneration</b>
<b>Director leading the review: Keith Townsend, Corporate Director - Environment</b>
<b>Lead officers: Sarah Hitchcock, Head of Net Zero Carbon Programme</b>
<p><b>Overall aim of the review:</b></p> <p>To review how the Council is taking the lead on encouraging sustainable development, developing policies to encourage sustainable economic development, and working to identify ways to support a circular economy in our borough with residents and businesses, to help achieve this goal. The review will look at the five Rs, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair.</p>
<p><b>Objectives of the review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the impact the Circular Economy Action Plan is having on the Net Zero Carbon 2030 goal.</li> <li>• To examine what members, residents and local businesses can do to support a Circular Economy in Islington, and to review how this can be best communicated</li> <li>• To make suggestions to feed into the upcoming Circular Economy Action Plan</li> <li>• To assess the impact of the council's development and economic development policies to ensure they are championing sustainable approaches</li> <li>• To consider how all council services can contribute to the circular economy</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does this review contribute to the Council's priorities?</b></p> <p>This review will consider how a Circular Economy can help to achieve to the Council's Net Zero Carbon goal and therefore is linked to the priority 'We work together to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough'.</p>
<p><b>Scope of the review and evidence to be received:</b></p> <p>The review will focus on...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How the Local Plan, the way we build Council homes and the way we manage our own buildings can all support a circular economy.</li> <li>2. How the effective local transport of people, products and materials is central to a circular economy, enabling local goods and material flows.</li> <li>3. How a circular economy can bring a range of economic benefits, from improved resource security at a larger scale, through to new economic and employment opportunities at the local scale.</li> </ol> <p>How circular economy approaches are promoted, and how to effectively work in partnership with residents and local businesses on this issue.</p>

The Committee will receive the following evidence:

1. Meeting 1 - 6 September 2022
  - Green Economy and Planning
  - Menstrual Waste- One off scrutiny report and Speaker
2. Meeting 2 – 3 October 2022
  - Council Buildings and Homes
3. Meeting 3 – 10 November 2022
  - Natural Environment
  - Urban Cultivate- External Speaker
4. Meeting 4 - 23 January 2023
  - Transport
  - The Last Mile- External Speaker

There will be three informal working group meetings covering the following topics:

1. Energy purchasing October 2022
2. Energy advice January 2023
3. Open topic on Renewable Power for London TBC March 2023

**Review timetable (list specific meeting dates if possible)**

1. SID to be agreed: 21/06/22
2. Witness evidence to be received: 06/09/22 – 23/01/23
3. Draft report to be considered: 20/02/23
4. Final report to be approved: 27/03/23
5. Report to be submitted to Executive: July 2023 (Date TBC)
6. Provisional date for Executive response: October 2023 (Date TBC)
7. Provisional date for 12 month update report back to the Committee: September 2024 (Date TBC)

**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.