

**Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 3 February 2015**

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 5, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 3 February 2015 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**           James Court (Chair), Diarmaid Ward (Vice-Chair), Gary Heather, Clare Jeapes, Caroline Russell and Nurrullah Turan

**Councillor James Court in the Chair**

**25        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Doolan and Nick Ward.

**26        DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

None.

**27        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**

None.

**28        MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 November 2014 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them subject to Councillor Turan being marked as present.

**29        PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A5)**

Questions from members of the public were addressed during the relevant items.

**30        CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A6)**

None.

**31        FUEL POVERTY SCRUTINY REVIEW - WITNESS EVIDENCE (Item B1)**

The Committee heard witness evidence from William Baker, Head of Fuel Poverty Policy, Citizens Advice and Peter Smith, National Energy Action (NEA) who led on policy and research functions. Both witnesses also sat on the government's fuel poverty advisory group.

In William Baker's presentation the following points were made:

- The government was consulting on the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy. This was the first strategy since the original in 2001.
- The strategy proposed a new fuel poverty target as it was recognised that the previous target to eliminate fuel poverty by 2016 was not going to be met. Fuel poverty had increased since 2001. The new target was to get as many fuel poor homes as was reasonably practicable, to achieve a minimum energy efficiency standard of Band C, by 2030.
- Citizens Advice supported the principle of setting a target for minimum energy efficiency and a date for this to be achieved as well as the interim targets which had been set. However it was concerned that as the target was just for fuel poor

households, this would help those in fuel poverty but not prevent people from getting into fuel poverty.

- William Baker raised concern that current programmes were not capable of meeting the targets. Suppliers were currently responsible for the delivery and the system was not set up to meet the multiple needs of those in fuel poverty. There were national programmes in Scotland and Wales but there was no longer one in England. Decentralising power to local authorities and registered social landlords could start addressing how the target could help to achieve the target.

In Peter Smith's presentation the following points were made:

- The government acknowledged the previous target would not be reached following a two year evidence based review. It was then considered that the target and timeframe should be changed.
- People's incomes had grown little in the last 4-5 years and the poor had become poorer.
- The price of fuel had risen by 120% since 2005.
- Professor John Hills, London School of Economics, had established a new definition of fuel poverty. If a household had an income of less than 60% of the national median and energy costs above the national median, it was deemed to be fuel poor.
- The fuel poverty gap calculated the depth of fuel poverty for each household.
- Approximately 255,000 households in London were fuel poor, with approximately 6,600 of these being in Islington.
- The health agenda and the Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE) were examples of the ways in which the council could help.
- When a person was eligible for assistance and had applied, there should be a guarantee of assistance to include meaningful engagement, energy efficiency advice, checks to confirm they were on the right tariff and equipment checks to confirm it was working correctly.
- Energy efficiency measures could reduce bills by £350-£400 per year. Generally, those on the lowest incomes returned money to the local economy more quickly than those on higher incomes so this could stimulate the economy.
- Less fuel poverty resulted in benefits such as better mental health, attainment and improved air quality as less energy had to be generated.
- The money the Treasury received from London gas bills was £110m per year and from London electricity bills was £240m per year. This came out of energy consumers' bills and did not take into account income as income tax did.
- Fuel poverty was a particular problem in the private rented sector. The council had environmental health powers to address problems of private landlords not meeting standards. Newham Council had done this with problematic Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Local authorities could set standards for their own housing (or those they paid housing benefit to) and there could be an energy efficiency target for social housing with housing associations encouraged to work towards the same target.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards could identify fuel poverty as a priority and set up a referral system.
- It was important to ensure that people claimed and received the benefits they were entitled to receive.
- The council had in place a crisis payment scheme.
- Section 106 agreements had provided funding in the past and would be used in the future.
- More investment was required and the Mayor for London recognised this. The council could lobby the Mayor for funding.
- Islington was one of the most proactive councils. Sharing best practice would help other local authorities reduce fuel poverty.

- In 2016, tenants would have a right to ask their landlord for energy efficiency measures to be installed in their home. By 2018, landlords would not be able to rent out properties with F and G energy efficiency ratings unless they met the exception criteria. National Energy Action was of the view that there should be no exceptions.
- Landlords were expected to provide their tenants with an energy efficiency rating for the property. This would advise them what could be done to improve the energy efficiency of the property. The landlord, and not the tenant, was responsible for any work. The average costs of improvements was £1,500.
- Some landlords did not realise that there was a tax allowance for energy efficiency work. National Energy Action produced guidance for landlords and was doing outreach work.
- Green Deal Finance was not generally suitable for low energy use households.
- Fuel poverty could exacerbate dampness in homes and this could have health impacts such as respiratory illness. This was increasingly being recognised by health professionals who had started to refer patients for help where appropriate. The Department of Energy and Climate Change had stated that there were health benefits associated to improving homes. Fuel poverty increased the number of hospital stays and operations such as hip replacements.
- There were economic reasons for tackling cold homes at the source.
- Energy Performance Certificates lasted for 10 years and if work was done, the certificate did not have to be reissued.
- Households where the primary heating source was non-gas were not energy efficient.
- Where there was a mixture of tenures on estates, this could make upgrade work more difficult and freeholders could decide whether or not to get work done. Households could be subsidised where necessary.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the evidence be noted.
- 2) That Peter Smith provide the Committee with the following additional documentation:  
The NEA's response to the Department of Energy and Climate Change's consultation 'Cutting the Cost of Keeping Warm: A New Fuel Poverty Strategy for England': The NEA's response to 'An End to Cold Homes: One Nation Labour's Plans for Energy Efficiency' and the NEA's low cost energy efficiency measure calculator.

**32**

**20MPH LIMIT SCRUTINY REVIEW - REPORT BACK (Item B2)**

Zahur Khan, Head of Traffic and Parking Services and Liz Wathen, Traffic and Safety Manager presented the report which updated members on progress on the recommendations of the March 2011 Regeneration and Employment Review Committee report on 'The Introduction of 20mph Zones'.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- 20mph zones had speed reduction measures e.g. speed humps.
- A 20mph limit was a scheme without speed reduction measures.
- Islington completed the first 20mph zone in 2002 and completed the last in 2009.
- The work to limit 50% of the borough's roads to 20mph was completed in 2010 and was considered to be successful.
- In 2011, the council decided to introduce a borough wide 20mph limit and the police objected. Only the police could enforce the scheme as speeding was a criminal offence and the police did not have the resources to undertake enforcement work.
- The biggest challenge since the completion of the work had been to address the public perception that there was a lack of enforcement.

- As part of the borough commander's priority to make Islington the safest borough in London, since October 2014 the police had been enforcing the 20mph limit. Prior to this, they completed a series of 27 stop and advice sessions with the council in which those travelling over the speed limit were stopped by the police and given advice by council staff.
- The police were working closely with the council. All Safer Neighbourhood Teams were involved and had been trained.
- The police did not have to advise the council when they would be carrying out enforcement as it was part of their day to day activities. In response to the committee's request for annual enforcement figures, the officers advised that they would request this from the police.
- Speed cameras in Islington were being upgraded to enforce the 20mph speed limit.
- Speeding ticket money went directly to the Treasury.
- The council was keen to work with TfL which had control over the strategic roads in the borough. TfL, which had initially raised concerns about the Islington 20mph limit, was now undertaking 20mph limit studies in the City of London and had started implementing some 20mph limits e.g. outside Waterloo Station.
- There was more enforcement of the 20mph limit than there had been of the 30mph limit.
- A cultural change was required to make speeding more socially unacceptable.
- If buses travelled at 20mph this would help to reduce the speed of other vehicles.
- Camden had introduced a 20mph limit and Hackney, Haringey and the City of London would soon be introducing the same or similar schemes.
- The average cost to the country of a Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) person was over £1million.
- The number of accidents on Islington's roads had reduced this year due to a number of factors.
- Reducing the number of accidents could encourage more people to walk or cycle.
- A member stated that a 20mph limit meant more people cycled and walked. This had effects such as a reduction in social isolation and obesity, which meant people required less support and relied less on council services. Improving the design of streets to encourage drivers to slow down could help with this. Officers advised that there was limited funding, however zebra crossings were being improved and this would encourage more people to walk. Community Infrastructure Levy money was being used for some schemes.
- In response to a member's comment that figures of outcomes would be useful e.g. walking to school figures and whether traffic volumes had reduced, it was suggested that the member could liaise with the Senior School Travel Plan Officer to identify a number of schools and compare their school travel plans.
- The council was undertaking work to improve cycle routes in the borough and more information could be given to the committee about this.
- Following a request from members, officers would ask the police to provide annual enforcement figures from before and after the implementation of the 20mph limit.
- A member of the public raised concern about speeding offences, more CCTV being required and issues with cyclists on Green Lanes. Officers advised that TfL was responsible for this section of road. TfL was working with the City of London on studies of 20mph limits and if satisfied with the results, it could decide to introduce 20mph limits more widely on its roads.
- A member of the public raised concern about speeding vehicles on side roads, often near schools. Officers advised that school crossing patrols were in place at schools. There were some speed humps near schools, however the council now had a policy not to put in new humps unless there was a specific or critical reason. Funding meant there was a need to react where accidents happened and where there were no accidents, it was difficult to justify putting in place precautionary measures when

accidents had occurred elsewhere. The resident suggested that similar signs to the one outside Grafton School which encouraged people to walk and cycle be placed outside all other school in the borough. Officers would look into this.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That officers consider placing signs outside all schools, encouraging people to walk and cycle.
- 3) That officers ask the police to provide annual enforcement figures both before and after the implementation of the 20mph limit.
- 4) That officers provide committee members with more information about planned cycle route improvements.

**33**

**WORK PROGRAMME (Item B3)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be noted subject to the following amendments:

- 1) That the Qir Quality report back be rescheduled to April or May 2015.
- 2) That the Executive Member's report be rescheduled to April or May 2015.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

**CHAIR**