

Environment
Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD

Report of: Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 8 February 2024

Ward(s): all

Subject: Executive Response to the Scrutiny Review of the Circular Economy and Green Jobs and Working Group on Waste Management

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Islington Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, recognising the need to drastically reduce carbon emissions in the borough. The council made a pledge to work towards being a net zero borough by 2030. Climate change is affecting our world today and will exacerbate the risk of health and social inequalities if unaddressed.
- 1.2 In October 2023 the Executive received a report from the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee about its scrutiny of the Net Zero Carbon Programme with a focus on the circular economy and green jobs and how these are contributing to Vision 2030, building a net zero carbon Islington. The Committee recommended eight actions for the Net Zero Carbon Programme in their report.
- 1.3 This report recommends that all eight of the recommendations are accepted in full.
- 1.4 This report contains a response to each recommendation and explains how the council intends to implement the recommendations. In some cases, the council has already started to implement the recommendations and where this is the case the report explains what is being progressed.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To agree the responses to the recommendations made by the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in relation to the council's approach to circular economy and green jobs through the Net Zero Carbon Programme. The recommendations are set out in Section 4 of this report.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Committee took evidence from September 2022 to February 2023, considering evidence on the following themes within the Net Zero Carbon programme:

- Islington Council presentation on the Circular Economy Action Plan
- Islington Council presentation on Green Economy and Planning
- Islington Council presentation on Council Housing and Buildings
- Islington Council presentation on the Natural Environment
- Islington Council presentation on Transport
- External evidence on Urban Agriculture
- External evidence on Cally Energy
- External evidence from University of Westminster

- 3.1 Members of the Committee made several recommendations to the Executive:

- 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:
 - a) maximise the opportunities for new Islington-based apprenticeships as a consequence of their future strategy and developments.
 - b) continue to focus on waste reduction and recycling to maximise diversion of waste from incineration.
 - c) review and understand the performance of London Energy and other contractors.
 - d) bring forward carbon capture at the Edmonton ERF.
- 2) Work to support residents in making sustainable choices and reducing waste by:
 - a) 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.

- b) maximising opportunities for local food growing and food supply, organic practices, prevention of food waste and effective food recycling.
 - c) 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.

4 Responses to the Recommendations

- 4.1. The Committee set out eight recommendations for the Net Zero Carbon Programme. The Executive accepts all these recommendations. The following section details the council's response to each recommendation and provides an update where appropriate of any work already underway to implement the recommendation.

Recommendation 1. Encourage the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) to support Islington Council in our reduce, reuse and recycle ambitions through their new Waste Strategy

- 4.2. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.3. Islington, and the other six constituent Boroughs and the NLWA operate on a partnership basis with regular dialogue and engagement to ensure that our mutual aims are understood and progressed. To support this work, a new Head of Environment and Waste Partnerships has recently been recruited. The post will support the partnership by working with the seven boroughs and the NLWA, reporting to Islington's Director of Environment and Commercial Operations, and the Chair of the NLWA Boroughs' Directors of Environment Group.
- 4.4. Islington is working to engage with the NLWA on several levels to achieve our reduce, reuse and recycle ambitions. They include:
- Active participation in the development of the new NLWA Joint Waste Strategy (JWS) through a Borough Officer Steering Group, and with Islington representing the boroughs on the JWS Board
 - Active participation in a range of officer meetings at Director, Technical Officer and Communications Officer level
- 4.5. An example of this engagement and joint working is the campaign now being carried out to promote reusable period products. This issue was first raised by the Scrutiny Committee, and it was picked up in our meetings with the NLWA. It has now been adopted as part of the Waste Prevention Programme and delivered by the NLWA on behalf of constituent boroughs.
- 4.6. The Reduce Reuse Your Cycle campaign was launched recently in partnership with the Women's Environmental Network. It features a new website (www.reducereuseyourcycle.co.uk), workshops, advertising and discounts on reusable period products.

a) Maximise the opportunities for new Islington-based apprenticeships as a consequence of their future strategy and developments

- 4.7. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.8. The council will ensure that Islington's interests are represented, encouraging more local employment and skills outcomes, through its participation on

NLWA's employment board. We have been feeding back to NLWA on their recruitment processes to develop an approach that would attract more Islington residents to the apprenticeship programmes. The council continues to challenge the NLWA on transparency on salaries being offered and encouraging more flexibility on recruitment practices to encourage a greater diversity of applicants. We are asking to be informed when Islington residents apply successfully for jobs and we are actively promoting those vacancies that are shared with us.

b) Continue to focus on waste reduction and recycling to maximise diversion of waste from incineration

- 4.9. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.10. Islington's waste reduction and recycling plans were set out in its Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) and agreed by the Executive earlier this year. It sets out proposals, now being implemented, for a transformation of recycling facilities on estates, expansion of food waste collections to remaining blocks of flats and a programme of repair and reuse events, amongst a range of other initiatives. In delivering these projects we will continue to explore new opportunities to minimise waste and increase recycling rates.

c) Review and understand the performance of London Energy and other contractors

- 4.11. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.12. We will actively review the performance of London Energy and other contractors through our position on the North London Waste Authority.
- 4.13. The performance of London Energy Ltd (LEL) is reported publicly and discussed at Authority meetings. Two Islington Executive Members sit on the Authority: Cllr Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance and Cllr Rowena Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport. Cllr Champion is also a member of the London Energy Ltd Board, which meets quarterly to make major decisions about the direction of the company and approve proposals for capital expenditure.
- 4.14. The performance of other contractors is reported on publicly and discussed at Authority meetings, Programme Committees, Members Recycling Working Group and Members Finance Working Group. Summaries of papers for public

meetings are sent to borough officers and discussed in briefings ahead of the meetings.

d) Bring forward carbon capture at the Edmonton ERF

- 4.15. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.16. We will use our influence as part of the NWLA to track progress and press for delivery of the carbon capture facility.
- 4.17. NLWA is aiming to install carbon capture at the EcoPark in the 2030s on the site of the current energy-from-waste facility after it has been decommissioned and dismantled. It is a major technical undertaking involving engineering, planning, financing, collaboration and project management. NLWA has appointed three expert teams to develop the strategic plans for carbon capture, transportation and storage at the EcoPark.
- 4.18. NLWA has also joined the Carbon Capture and Storage Association which is the lead UK and European trade association aiming to accelerate commercial deployment. NLWA is a partner too in the Bacton Thames Net Zero (BTNZ) Cooperation Agreement, which is exploring the feasibility of transporting to, and storing carbon dioxide from Southeast England and the Thames Estuary in the Hewett depleted gas field in the North Sea.

Recommendation 2. Work to support residents in making sustainable choices and reducing waste by:

a) 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.

- 4.19. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.20. The council will develop a food waste recycling campaign with the aim of reducing the quantity of food that is wasted and thrown away and increasing participation in food waste recycling services. The ambition is to deliver this campaign - funded by a windfall levy on LEL income - during Spring 2024.
- 4.21. The council will also work closely with, and support, the Islington Food Partnership. The partnership's food strategy includes work directly around: food waste reduction, both at source through utilising surplus food and at end stage through composting food waste; and increasing local food growing

through work with schools and the Octopus network.

4.22. Through the NLWA, we support the London wide 'Eat Like a Londoner' campaign, which aims to improve eating habits and reduce food waste across London. We will request an evaluation of this campaign.

4.23. The council also promotes the use of food sharing apps, such as Olio, to reduce food waste.

b) Maximising opportunities for local food growing and food supply, organic practices, prevention of food waste and effective food recycling.

4.24. The Executive accepts this recommendation. The council has already started to bring forward some initiatives to support this area.

4.25. The Council has worked with a partner to secure a research grant to look at a series of urban agriculture methods that can create net-zero sources of food in urban spaces. We are assessing which methods could work best in Islington, and seeking many perspectives to look at what is feasible and to understand the barriers to urban agriculture. The results will be published before the end of the year.

4.26. Through the Thriving Neighbourhoods, Greener Together and Housing Community Gardening Teams, the council is providing funding and resources to allow community-led growing ideas on housing estates, public realm and parks to be explored, and where feasible to be implemented. Currently there are 18 projects across our estates. These programmes will be in place for 2024/25 and we will report back to the Scrutiny Committee on their delivery.

c) 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.

4.27. The Executive accepts this recommendation.

4.28. We are actively working with NLWA to deliver a campaign to encourage the use of reusable period products and to reduce associated plastic waste.

4.29. A real nappy voucher scheme has operated for some years and continues to support parents to use reusable nappies for their babies.

4.30. We will explore other potential opportunities to promote reusable products, for example, through campaigns with our anchor institution network.

Recommendation 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.

- 4.31. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.32. The council has recently created a Public Affairs team which will help to support lobbying work. We will work with them to determine policy positions and asks from Government, and we will look at how these asks align with the London Councils Climate Advocacy Strategy 2023-24 and activities within the One World Living workstream which that have also identified the need to lobby retailers.
- 4.33. The Waste Reduction and Recycling workstream will work with colleagues in the Green Economy workstream to explore opportunities for engagement with retailers.

Recommendation 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

- 4.34. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.35. The council will actively monitor the development of in-house skills and start including this in Net Zero Carbon programme progress reporting going forward. This will relate not only to retrofit but other net zero skills, because the council is upskilling our delivery teams generally through the work on the Net Zero Carbon programme. For example, teams have gained increased technical knowledge and project management skills through the delivery of specific projects such as the decarbonisation of the WRC and solar panel installations across a further four corporate buildings. Similarly, the work to upgrade the Building Management Systems across Corporate Buildings and Housing is requiring our teams to gain new skills and experience to operate more complex systems.
- 4.36. Housing Property Services are considering how retrofit skills can be developed in house. However, there are practical challenges which mean this may be a longer term goal. The primary challenge is securing sufficient continuous funding for a building decarbonisation programme with a clear pipeline of retrofit works to justify the resourcing of in-house retrofit assessors and co-ordinators. Currently we are reliant on grant funding opportunities to instigate works, these are not consistent nor is there a guarantee that funding will be secured when we bid. This makes the cost and time involved in creating an in-house team currently unviable as there is not a clear and funded programme to work on.

- 4.37. Nonetheless, we will promote retrofit training to our staff. We actively participate in the Retrofit London workstream, as part of the London Councils Climate Change Programme. They have just launched a free training offer that they have negotiated for Council Officers and we will proactively encourage staff to take this up.
- 4.38. We will further support the development of local retrofit skills for the borough through planning conditions. For example, two recent planning permissions for large scale housing development in the borough; the former Holloway Prison site and Barnsbury Estate redevelopment, have included the creation and financial contributions towards a green skills hub and training. The purpose of these contributions is to support green skills training, which includes skills relevant to retrofit, within the borough.
- 4.39. More widely, the Planning Department has published and is continuing to produce and publish planning guidance and supplementary planning documents, together with providing free planning guidance services to support Islington residents and businesses to undertake appropriate retrofit works to properties within the borough. We will develop and share these documents across relevant internal departments to ensure there is a consistent approach to share learning. This will also facilitate inhouse skills relating to retrofit and support implementation of local retrofit skills.

Recommendation 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

- 4.40. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.41. The need for controlling weeds within the built environment is required, as when left unattended, they can cause a variety of issues including but not limited to:
- damage to tarmac and paved surfaces (hugely increasing the cost of maintaining infrastructure).
 - clogging drainage channels that are essential for the clearance of surface water hindering the use of disability vehicles and wheelchairs.
- 4.42. The alternative substitutes for glyphosate (hot foam, water or steam; mechanised brushing; acetic acid; electric and hand weeding) have been evaluated against the criteria of the efficacy, length of control, cost, environmental impact, the degree to which the activity may disrupt others, and health and safety implications. Based on this evaluation none outperform glyphosate and they have poor environmental profiles as all insect life within the weed population is destroyed (except with hand weeding).

- 4.43. The application of glyphosate through the Weed-IT spot spraying technology is currently by far the most efficient, effective and productive means to limit the damage and nuisance caused by weeds.
- 4.44. We have held discussions on the future approach to weed control and management on housing estates and blocks, including the potential of using a mechanised weeding ripper. This option requires a trial to test its effectiveness. To date, we have been unable to complete this due to logistics issues with the supplier.
- 4.45. In 2023, the council attended the PAN (Pesticide Action Network) UK demonstration of the removal of herbicides from their operations. Despite daily maintenance, there was evidence of weed growth and footway undermining. This approach is not suitable as it is resource and cost intensive.
- 4.46. The introduction of resident led schemes are considered the best alternative. To reduce the use of pesticides, the council can arrange for selected locations to be removed from the weed spraying application programme with the assistance of resident groups who are willing to maintain the footways to ensure invasive weeds do not compromise the infrastructure. The council is investigating the possibility of introducing a resident-led 'pesticide free street scheme' to aid our biodiversity commitments. We will need support and recommendations from residents to identify appropriate areas where the scheme could be delivered. We will seek to launch the scheme following this consultation.

Recommendation 6. Review best practice to help the council support and enable community energy schemes in the borough to support the overall buildings retrofit programme.

- 4.47. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.48. Islington Council recently completed Round 6 of the Islington Community Energy Fund (ICEF), a grant funding scheme that supports community-led innovative energy projects that reduce carbon emissions and benefit residents, providing both funding for feasibility studies and capital delivery. Prior to each round, officers look at other community energy funds across London, including the London Community Energy Fund (LCEF), to ensure that we are working together to assist groups in the most effective way possible.
- 4.49. There have been six rounds of ICEF since 2018. In total, around £650,000 has been given in grant funding to 52 projects. These include feasibility studies as well as capital projects. Overall, the capital projects are estimated to save around 161 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. This is via a mixture of solar PV installation, LED lighting, heating efficiencies and other measures.
- 4.50. Round 6 of ICEF was the last round that funding was allocated for. Discussions will take place in the first half of 2024 on the future of the scheme and how the Council can best support and enable community energy schemes that help decarbonise

Islington's building stock, with a proposal brought to the Climate Action Executive Board for approval.

- 4.51. The ICEF administrator liaises with community energy groups on all types of projects and potential projects, offering support and assistance including linking them with teams in the council or external bodies.
- 4.52. In addition, the council is liaising with community energy groups such as Cally Energy and Power Up North London to support their plans for community solar schemes. Officers are also looking at how community-funded projects can be integrated with school decarbonisation projects funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme without impacting the financial savings for the schools.

Recommendation 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.

- 4.53. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.54. The council will develop a freight action plan that includes projects and initiatives that will reduce the impact of freight traffic, taking into account existing planning, licensing and noise regulations that limit noise and disturbance, and these include:
- encouraging local businesses to switch their use of vans to cargo bikes
 - installing more parcel lockers around the borough to support reduced doorstep deliveries
 - facilitating the establishment of micro logistics hubs that uses zero emission bikes to complete last-mile deliveries
 - consider re-purposing space on council estates for use as micro logistics hubs
- 4.55. We will explore options to expand the Smarter Green Logistics programme. This programme, working with the Cross River Partnership, will enable us to promote the business use of cargo bikes in particular.
- a) Minimising the negative impacts of last mile logistics hubs, micro-kitchens and driver behaviours.**
- 4.56. The executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.57. The council will continue to explore ways of minimising the negative impacts of these areas. Much work has already been carried out by the council to minimise the escalating problems with food delivery platforms and the anti-social behaviour of some delivery riders. This has involved working with restaurants in several

borough hotspots, and support for Wings, an ethical food delivery platform and rider-owned cooperative, to show what a responsible and ethical food delivery service would look like.

- 4.58. The council is holding many conversations directly with the delivery platforms (such as Uber & Deliveroo) to try to manage and mitigate problems relating to rider behaviour. Transport for London (TfL) and meal and grocery delivery companies have committed to improving road safety in London with the launch of a new voluntary Meal and Grocery Delivery Company Motorcycle Road Safety Charter. The Charter, signed by five companies: Deliveroo, Getir, Just Eat, Stuart and Uber Eats, consists of ten road safety principles that aim to keep motorcycle couriers and other Londoners safe on the road. We will review how effective this Charter is in addressing issues within Islington.
- 4.59. The Council has recently adopted a new Local Plan, which includes specific planning policy to maximise the use of sustainable means of transports. Where development does propose the essential use of non-sustainable transport modes, these must be mitigated.
- 4.60. Where new facilities like micro and/or dark kitchens are subject to planning and licencing the council will seek to ensure that we do what we can to reduce any impact through the use of reasonable planning conditions and operational management plans.

Recommendation 8. Investigate how we can use air quality monitoring and reporting as part of our performance reporting and promotion of net zero carbon ambitions.

- 4.61. The Executive accepts this recommendation.
- 4.62. The Net Zero Carbon Team is working with colleagues across Transport Strategy and Air Quality to explore ways of measuring the impact of the programme and whether air quality monitoring can help to inform this.
- 4.63. There are lots sources of air pollution, and many of these sources also produce carbon dioxide, for example, internal combustion engine vehicles or fossil fuelled heating systems. We will continue to monitor air quality using our air quality monitoring network, which we report on every year in our Annual Status Report. The report shows us changes in NO₂, which is produced whenever something is burned alongside CO₂, at points across the borough every year. We will also use the London Atmospheric Emissions (LAEI) created by GLA and TfL to get an idea of any changes in sources of air pollution. The LAEI is updated periodically and shows modelled maps of pollution concentrations across the borough, as well as estimating pollution emissions from different sources.
- 4.64. We would like to help residents better understand their impact on air pollution and climate change and we are exploring the ways in which we can engage with

residents on this. An example of this is the current trial in Mildmay where real-time data on air pollution is due to be shared and can be used as a proxy for carbon emissions. This will allow us to demonstrate the actual impact of resident activity in the area and can be used as an educational tool to encourage action to reduce air pollution.

- 4.65. Through a promotional campaign currently under development, the Council's Public Health team will promote the value of physical activity and active travel to residents and partners (including health and social care partners) across the borough. This includes advocating for the council's People Friendly Streets Initiatives by highlighting the risks to health posed by air pollution and physical inactivity, and the potential for this initiative to have a positive impact on pollution and activity levels.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.2 The responses to the recommendations in this report do not commit any additional financial resources with programmes and projects delivered, in progress and reflected in existing budget plans or to be considered as part of future bids.

5.3 Legal Implications

- 5.4 The council declared a climate emergency on 27th June 2019, when a motion committing the council to working towards making Islington net zero carbon by 2030 was unanimously passed by a meeting of full council.

- 5.5 Implementation of the recommendations and responses set out in this report must be carried out in compliance with:

(a) the terms of all relevant primary legislation, including the Environment Act 2021, the Building Safety Act 2022 and any associated regulations made thereunder;

(b) published council strategies and policies, in particular Vision 2030: Building a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030; and

(c) the council's Financial Regulations, Procurement Rules and the general provisions set out in the council's Constitution.

5.6 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

5.7 The recommendations within this report, and therefore any resulting action, or any actions already in progress by the council, will have a positive impact in the delivery of the council's ambitions of Vision 2030.

5.8 Equalities Impact Assessment

5.9 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

5.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because these assessments are carried out as required by the relevant service at the point of project development. This report provides a response to recommendations on an existing programme of work which is being delivered by a number of services across the council.

6 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1 Whilst the Net Zero Carbon programme is underway and working to agreed action plans, it is continuously evolving and developing and therefore we have sought to build the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations into the existing programme of work by either incorporating them into existing activities or scheduling them into forward plans. This report summarises the progress and delivery in relation to the recommendations made by the Committee.

Appendices:

- None

Background papers:

- None

Final report clearance:

Authorised by: Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport

Date: 30 January 2024

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