

London Borough of Islington

Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee - 8 October 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 8 October 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Clarke (Chair), Hayes (Vice-Chair), Bossman-Quarshie, Jeapes, Russell and Weekes
Also Present: **Councillors:** Nanda, Champion

Councillor Tricia Clarke in the Chair

- 20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**
Apologies were received from Cllr Graham
- 21 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**
Cllr Heather was a substitute for Cllr Graham
- 22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**
No Declarations were made
- 23 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the previous meeting on 3 September 2024 were agreed.
- 24 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**
The Chair updated the committee.

The Climate Action Supplementary Planning Document will soon be circulated to the committee, with a follow-up report scheduled for the January meeting. This document is part of ongoing efforts to enhance the area's response to climate challenges.

Mildmay Ward is set to benefit from a significant package of improvements, including the creation of new green spaces, upgraded pavements, and the development of more child-friendly streets. These enhancements are part of Islington's broader initiative to improve local neighbourhoods.

Apple Day at the Ecology Centre is scheduled for Saturday, October 19, from 12 to 4 PM. The event will feature live music, Morris dancing, crafts, face painting, and a variety of English apples to taste, juice, and purchase. It's a great opportunity for the community to celebrate and enjoy seasonal produce.

For the Nature Neighbourhoods Project, project coordinator Rosie Appley will attend the committee meeting on November 12 to provide updates. She also has events lined up, including the next community discussion on October 24 at 5:30 PM at Whittington Park Community Centre. This event will bring together Co-op Sustain, Islington Council's Local Economies team, and community members to discuss food systems.

25 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A6)

Public Questions were taken after each Agenda Item.

26 SCRUTINY TOPIC - BILL SINFIELD ON STREET CLEANSING (Item C1)

Bill Sinfield and Mark Fontaine gave a presentation to the committee on Street Cleansing in the Borough.

The Council's 2013 Vision for a Cleaner, Healthier Islington aimed to create liveable neighbourhoods that were clean, pleasant, and enjoyable for all residents. To measure cleanliness across the borough, the council utilised Local Environmental Quality metrics, assessing various factors that affected residents' quality of life. Significant improvements included the introduction of an in-house reporting system that allowed residents to track and receive updates on litter-related issues they reported. Additionally, the council collaborated with Kingdom Services to encourage behaviour change through "litter reinforcement" efforts, providing an overview of this improvement cycle.

Cleaning operations in Islington saw enhancements in daily and weekly schedules: main roads were cleaned seven days a week, while residential streets were swept four times a week. The street-cleaning team consisted of 72 sweepers and 49 supporting staff, focusing on addressing litter, dog waste, fly-tipping, and graffiti. To ensure coverage, the council operated six sub-depots, deploying sweepers daily in their respective areas. Resources were also allocated for leaf collection in autumn to keep walkways clear, alongside a winter maintenance program running from November to April to address inclement weather, ensuring safety on main routes for vulnerable residents. The total service cost was £3.1 million annually, employing 121 staff, though recent adjustments reduced the team from 86 to 72 sweepers, saving £300,000 per year while maintaining existing cleaning schedules.

Community initiatives and technological advancements bolstered local engagement and cleanliness. A new community weeding scheme encouraged residents to actively participate in managing their streets by removing invasive weeds, complementing the council's efforts to reduce glyphosate use and cultivate wildflowers. The council also implemented a back-office system called Alloy, linked to the Love Clean Streets app, enabling residents to report littering, fly-tipping, and other issues. Alloy generated workflows for real-time responses, allowing users to track progress and receive notifications upon task completion. This system also produced valuable data for the council, enabling the creation of heat maps to optimise cleaning strategies based on identified needs.

Littering and environmental enforcement were structured through a system of fines and patrols, with a fixed penalty of £100 for littering, reduced to £80 if paid within 14

days. Dedicated patrols focused on deterring littering and enforcing penalties to reduce environmental offenses, utilising data to pinpoint and address littering hotspots. Numerous fixed penalty notices were issued to discourage future infractions, and the enforcement efforts contributed to social initiatives, including a £10,000 donation to Islington's Library of Things, benefiting the community. Data-driven actions were implemented to address littering and fly-tipping hotspots, employing AI-enabled waste watch cameras to monitor chronic fly-tipping areas. The deployment of these cameras resulted in a significant decline in weekly fly-tipping incidents. The council achieved a high prosecution success rate for environmental offenses, reflecting its commitment to maintaining cleanliness standards. Furthermore, the council benchmarked its performance against neighbouring boroughs, demonstrating superior cleanliness and fewer offenses compared to areas like Camden and Hackney.

Ongoing programs and community engagement were essential in maintaining Islington's high cleanliness standards. Initiatives like winter maintenance and year-round litter-picking actively involved local groups in environmental efforts. Key high-traffic areas received cleaning five days a week to meet the demand for higher maintenance. The council educated the public about terms such as detritus (natural debris) and litter (primarily synthetic waste), clarifying its operational focus on street cleanliness. This multifaceted approach, integrating technology, community involvement, and robust enforcement, underscored the council's commitment to fostering a cleaner, healthier Islington.

Concerns were raised about the inadequate cleaning schedule, which occurs only four days a week, exacerbating litter problems primarily caused by food containers, cans, and plastic bottles discarded by visitors who eat in their parked cars. They pointed out that much of this litter is non-recyclable due to contamination and stressed that while the council has been actively engaged in litter-picking and enforcement efforts, these actions alone might not resolve the issue. They called for greater involvement from local businesses and the community to promote civic pride and discourage littering behaviour.

Questions arose regarding the enforcement of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for littering, noting that approximately 37% of fines issued remained unpaid. This raised concerns about the council's enforcement strategies and whether non-payers faced adequate repercussions. The council explained that unpaid fines could lead to prosecution, although they acknowledged that the court system had limitations on handling such cases. It was highlighted the importance of distinguishing between fines issued to residents versus visitors, as many non-residents frequent the area for work or nightlife, and they inquired about the council's efforts to engage schools and community groups in anti-littering campaigns.

Appreciation was expressed for street cleaning staff, particularly during the autumn leaf-fall season, but concerns were raised regarding the funding model for Kingdom staff, the council's litter enforcement team, suggesting it could be problematic given the current cost-of-living crisis. It was emphasised that educational initiatives might be more effective than punitive measures in combating littering, stressing the need for a balance between enforcement and community education.

In response to these discussions, Officers outlined several upcoming initiatives, including a “mute community weeding” program designed to keep streets clear of invasive plants. This program would require local coordinators and emphasise community buy-in for success. They also proposed a pilot communication strategy that included community awareness campaigns and potential door-to-door engagement to gauge resident support.

It was recommended to benchmark Islington's cleanliness standards against those of other boroughs to gain broader insights into effective strategies. The officers acknowledged that while such comparisons could be valuable, the diverse demographics and cleaning schedules of other boroughs might yield varying results. Additionally, quality control was deemed essential, and resident feedback was proposed as a new approach to improve cleanliness strategies.

A significant concern was raised about health hazards related to waste left by ride-sharing drivers and other litter. The need for specialised cleanup teams to manage hazardous waste was noted. Officers confirmed that such measures were already in place, including offering vaccinations for operatives working in high-risk areas. The meeting also touched on the noise pollution caused by cleaning equipment and the importance of sustainable practices. Officers noted a transition toward quieter, electric fleet vehicles to reduce noise and support Islington's net-zero carbon goals.

Fly-tipping enforcement was discussed, with councillors expressing concerns about the effectiveness of addressing large-scale incidents compared to minor littering offenses. Officers shared those ongoing efforts aimed to improve the detection of fly-tipping, including the use of surveillance tools like cameras, but acknowledged the challenges in apprehending offenders.

Officers explained that they utilised data from platforms like Love Clean Streets to create heat maps identifying cleanliness hotspots, allowing for a more data-driven approach to resource allocation.

Around 30% of FPNs went unpaid, which could lead to a perception that littering is acceptable. They urged for a hierarchy of enforcement priorities to focus on more significant littering offenses. Concerns about the visibility of homelessness in the area were also raised, linking it to increased waste in public spaces, prompting discussions on coordinating with outreach teams to address these challenges.

A resident from Tufnell Park inquired about the council's plans for leaf collection, particularly in the context of the area's significant natural conservation status, which results in a greater accumulation of leaves. The resident highlighted the need for a more tailored approach to leaf management during the leafing season. In response, it was explained that the borough is organised into three sections, with additional resources allocated specifically for areas experiencing heavy leaf fall, such as Pemberton Gardens and Ivory New Park. While there isn't a round-the-clock service for leaf collection, the council ensures that extra support is available to manage the clean-up effectively.

Martijn Cooljmans, Director of Climate and Transport, presented to the Committee on the Archway Leisure Centre retrofit project.

An overview was provided regarding two significant projects aimed at reducing carbon emissions from council-owned buildings: the Archway Leisure Centre and the Waste Recycling Centre. The focus was on the decarbonisation efforts undertaken at these buildings.

A summary of the carbon emissions from various key council buildings, which included 200 properties such as the Town Hall, council offices, libraries, care centres, leisure centres, and schools. It was noted that leisure centres produced the highest carbon emissions, primarily due to the energy required to heat swimming pools, while the Waste Recycling Centre also had substantial emissions.

Specific details about the Waste Recycling Centre highlighted the installation of nearly 1,200 solar panels and the replacement of traditional gas heating systems with air source heat pumps for both water and space heating. This shift eliminated gas usage entirely within the building. The total cost of these improvements exceeded three million pounds, with approximately one-third of the funding sourced from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The project at the Waste Recycling Centre was completed in May, and the annual carbon savings were estimated to be between 200 and 300 tons of CO₂, resulting in a cost of about 371 pounds per ton of carbon saved.

For the Archway Leisure Centre, it was noted that construction was about to begin. Plans included installing 83 solar panels, replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps, and implementing a new building management system to enhance operational efficiency. The estimated cost for this project was around three million pounds, with two-thirds of the funding covered by grants. The cost per ton of CO₂ saved for this project was projected at approximately 476 pounds.

Challenges in obtaining sufficient grant funding for decarbonisation efforts were discussed, particularly for insulation and double glazing, which were deemed crucial yet costly and less likely to receive financial support. The importance of these projects in demonstrating the costs, benefits, and measures necessary for reducing carbon emissions in their buildings was emphasised.

There was a query regarding whether air source heat pumps could effectively heat swimming pool water, to which it was confirmed that they could be used for both heating space and water.

There was a discussion about the feasibility of using heat networks to provide energy for buildings. It was clarified that two different approaches were being explored: one focused on improving individual buildings with insulation and non-gas heating alternatives like air source or ground source heat pumps, and the other aimed at developing heat networks that could leverage waste heat from sources such as data centres or the underground train system.

A question was raised about the council's strategy regarding communal heating systems in residential areas and whether there were plans to expand this approach.

throughout the borough. It was suggested that housing colleagues would be better equipped to address this aspect.

Concerns were also raised regarding residents' hesitations about new technologies, particularly air source heat pumps, and the potential for them to feel cold if the systems did not function as expected. It was suggested that sharing learning experiences from implemented projects could help build community confidence. Regarding the underground heat sources, it was explained that extracting heat from the underground system was not straightforward and would require establishing a dedicated heat network. This involves significant infrastructure development and collaboration with Transport for London.

Further questions were posed about the impact of recent government policy changes on funding for investment in energy-efficient projects. It was noted that grant funding levels have changed, making it more challenging to secure necessary financing for multiple projects.

There were inquiries about comparing the cost of carbon reduction across various projects within the council and the effectiveness of investing in building decarbonisation versus other sectors such as transportation. The complexity of measuring carbon footprints across different initiatives was acknowledged, with ongoing efforts to establish benchmarks.

A resident asked about potential disruptions for users of the centre during the retrofit works and whether there had been any modelling on operating costs, particularly given the rising costs of electricity compared to gas. In response, it was explained that minimising disruption was a priority, and the project team was working closely with the site manager and contractor. Temporary boilers and generators would be used during the transition to maintain services. Regarding operating costs, while specific figures for the Archway Leisure Centre weren't available, the Waste Recycling Centre reported a 30% reduction in energy consumption after the retrofit, resulting in lower running costs.

28 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT (Item C2)**

Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality & Transport presented their annual report to the committee.

They acknowledged the hard work of council officers, particularly in areas like energy services and active travel, highlighting recent achievements such as winning gold in the London in Bloom competition for health and wellbeing.

The Executive Member outlined key initiatives, including the planting of over 930 trees, investment in state-based recycling, and the launch of a liveable neighbourhood project aimed at improving urban spaces. They emphasised the importance of district heat networks in reducing energy costs and their team's commitment to overcoming challenges in climate action plans.

Progress was noted in reducing carbon emissions, increasing electric vehicle charging points, and enhancing cycling infrastructure. The Executive member mentioned ongoing efforts to improve recycling rates and food waste campaigns, while also addressing the needs of vulnerable residents concerning air pollution.

There had been collaborative efforts across various teams to create a coherent approach to sustainability, emphasising initiatives that focus on children-friendly environments and reducing flood risks. Overall, the presentation stressed the importance of community engagement and innovative strategies in achieving environmental and social goals.

Concerns were expressed regarding the perception of pollution in certain areas, particularly where shops and residents were located. It was acknowledged that intense work was being done that often went unnoticed, leading to misconceptions about pollution being concentrated in specific places. There was a noted need for clearer data to demonstrate the council's equity approach to addressing these issues. In response to pollution on main roads, it was acknowledged that these roads naturally had higher traffic and, consequently, more traffic pollution. However, it was noted that pollution levels across the borough had significantly improved. A study by a local university indicated that the implementation of three LTNs in the southern part of the borough had a more substantial positive impact on boundary roads than on internal roads.

Several points were raised, starting with the terminology used in discussions about road danger reduction. The term "accident" was mentioned in reference to road traffic incidents, which was not preferred by advocacy groups. Instead, there was a push for using terms like "collision" or "crash." It was also pointed out that the council presumably had access to extensive data from app-based parking systems, prompting inquiries about whether this data was being utilised to inform future parking decisions. It was explained that the parking team utilised data from parking apps to inform their decisions, such as implementing surcharges during peak parking hours.

Concerns were raised about older low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) established during the pandemic. Questions arose about the plans for those main roads and the older LTNs, especially since local shops and businesses along those roads felt somewhat overlooked. Questions arose about the outcomes of the food waste bins for flats above shops trial. There were also concerns about the limited availability of dockless bike hire bays, leading to inquiries about potential plans to expand them beyond the currently designated number.

Challenges surrounding older LTNs were recognised, along with the limitations of resources available for improvement. While the transport planning teams were noted to be well-resourced compared to other boroughs, prioritising projects remained difficult. There was assurance that older LTNs would be revisited, but immediate focus would need to be on new areas for improvements.

On the topic of food waste, promises were made to provide updates regarding the trial for food waste bins in properties above shops. There was also mention of an aim for a minimum of 250 dockless bike bays across the borough, with an initial

focus on areas of higher demand and the concentration of issues. Plans for additional phases of the bike scheme were also in the pipeline.

There was a suggestion that the council should focus on key priority areas requiring improvement, particularly the recycling rate, which had stagnated around 24-27%. A desire was expressed to see a detailed action plan outlining how the council intended to enhance recycling efforts between 2024 and 2026. It was highlighted that food waste recycling was a major focus, particularly among street properties, where recycling rates for food waste were significantly lower. Improving the infrastructure for recycling in estates was deemed essential, with significant investment made to address this issue. Plans were discussed to begin work on the next waste reduction and recycling plan in the following year, setting clear targets to drive up recycling rates. Understanding the challenges and behaviours affecting recycling rates, particularly in different property types, was critical.

The installation of new recycling bins in various areas was pointed out as a potential way to enhance neighbourhood appearance and reduce litter. Inquiries were made about whether there was evidence to suggest that the new bins reduced contamination rates in recycling, alongside concerns over communication regarding the bins' locations.

Regarding the extended producer responsibility (EPR) policy, it was explained that, this mandated producers of packaging to contribute financially to disposal costs, incentivising reductions in packaging. While the exact financial implications remained unclear, it was noted that the funding would support waste management efforts.

The role of a climate panel in promoting better communication strategies around recycling was reiterated, with suggestions that they could help champion recycling initiatives within the community. There was assurance that data analysis would be conducted to evaluate the impact of the new bins on recycling rates and contamination.

29 WORK PLAN 2024-25 (Item C4)

RESOLVED:

That the work plan was noted.

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

CHAIR