

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2017

Present:

Councillor Peel – In the Chair

Councillors Appleby, Azra Ali, Shaukat Ali, Igbon, Kirkpatrick, Leech, Ludford, Marshall, Paul (NESC/16/42-47), Rawson, Sadler and Sheikh

Councillor N Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Battle, Executive Member for Environment

Steve Merridew, Chair of Manchester a Certain Future (MACF), Green Infrastructure Sub Group

Robin Lawlor, Chief Executive Officer, Northwards Housing

Marc Hudson, member of the public

Apologies:

Councillor Hughes and Noor

NESC/17/01 Minutes

Decision:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 as a correct record.

NESC/17/02 Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy **NESC/17/03 Tree Action Plan**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Development), the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth & Neighbourhoods), the Deputy Chief Executive (People, Policy and Reform) and the Chair of *Manchester: A Certain Future*, Green Infrastructure Sub Group. Manchester's Green and Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan (July 2015) was developed jointly by the Council and the *Manchester: A Certain Future (MACF)* Green and Blue Infrastructure Group. This report updated members on the progress towards achieving the actions in the plan.

The Committee also received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth & Neighbourhoods) on the final Manchester Tree Action Plan on which they were invited to comment prior to it being provided to Executive for approval. Since the Tree Action Plan sat within the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy the Chair advised that the Committee would consider these items together. The Strategic Director (Development) and Steve Merridew, the Chair of Manchester a Certain Future, Green Infrastructure Sub Group (MCAF) introduced the report on Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy across its main themes. The Head of Policy Partnerships and Research introduced the Tree Action Plan report; explaining this was a key aspect of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

Members discussed street trees and noted they were a priority amongst residents. In response to a query officers confirmed that highways trees and street trees were the

same. Members asked how street trees were maintained. A member said the Council sometimes provided street trees in front gardens instead, if for example there was not enough space on the street, and asked how those trees could be protected when the land was not maintained by the Council. Another member commented on high rates of vandalism of young saplings planted on streets and asked officers to consider whether larger saplings could be used instead. The Executive Member for the Environment explained that cost was a consideration and also location.

Members discussed the reference in the Action Plan to bringing unmanaged woodland back into a productive state. One member felt the focus should instead be on planting more trees. The Environmental Strategy Lead agreed that some woodlands could be managed by non intervention, however one of the priorities of the Tree Action Plan was to identify the stock and make up across the city. He described the Council's work with City of Trees, formerly Red Rose Forest, to adopt active management to make woodland healthier and successful in terms of biodiversity and access. He added that Manchester has double the national average proportion of land devoted to tree cover and where it was appropriate for tree planting this would be pursued. He said that City of Trees worked with partners to implement their objectives; for example last year they worked with Southways Homes to plant a number of Community Orchards. He added that City of Trees employed an Orchards Officer who was working closely with the Council to map the current provision across the city and identify appropriate locations for new planting. A member asked about Clean City and queried whether information was available on those projects that had been refused and whether this could be compared with those projects that were funded. The Environmental Strategy Lead advised that he did not have this information to hand; however further information on Clean City could be provided to the Committee. A member requested that information on this should be provided to all Councillors.

Members discussed planning and what could be done to ensure that any trees removed by developments were replaced. A member argued that the Council should use its planning powers to ensure that developers replace more trees than they remove. The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Research advised that he was aware of some policies in relation to this, for example, Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) have a policy of replacing more trees than they remove. The Chair described a situation which had led to some confusion since the ownership had changed. He asked for more information to be provided to ward co-ordination or a future meeting regarding the practicalities of how such policies are implemented. The Executive Member for the Environment advised she was in discussions with the Council's Planning Department regarding this and she would invite them to attend the meeting next time this was discussed.

A member challenged the low number of respondents to the consultation exercise. She suggested that officers use ward co-ordination to engage with residents in the community who may not have access to the internet. The Executive Member for the Environment outlined some of the Council's successes in respect of Communications and advised she would meet with the Head of Communications to ensure that all consultations were informed by good practice.

A member asked for more information about the volunteer service with City of Trees. The Environmental Strategy Lead advised that people could volunteer through the City of Trees web-site; and the information could be circulated to the Committee. A member asked about how the benefits of trees could be promoted to different demographics within the community for example older people and those with mental health problems. Steve Merridew described an event that Manchester A Certain Future had organised a couple of years ago which had addressed these issues, in particular mental health. He explained they had worked closely with Manchester Metropolitan University to develop a funding bid to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

A member asked what 'meanwhile sites' were and why no action had been taken on these. The Environmental Strategy Lead advised that these were sites that were waiting for development to take place; for example, development had been approved but not yet commenced or the land was offered for sale. He described a number of initiatives which had taken place on meanwhile sites. In response to a member's query about a site in Moss Side he said he would respond directly to the member.

The Chair said he would like more information on Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and how these could be made and suggested a briefing note be provided to all Councillors on this via ward co-ordination. A member added that he would like this to include information on how the Council treats trees on Council owned land in terms of TPO's and how the policy applied to trees in back gardens, to which the Chair agreed. The Chair requested that the Committee receive a future update at an appropriate time. He noted that this should include consideration of the implications of Brexit for future funding of environmental improvement work and tree planting.

Decisions:

1. To endorse the recommendation contained within the report:
"That the Executive endorses the Manchester Tree Action Plan as an integral part of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan."
2. To request that all Councillors receive regular updates on the progress and initiatives of the Clean City initiative.
3. To request that information regarding projects relating to Green and Blue Infrastructure and the Tree Action Plan be provided to ward co-ordination to encourage participation and engagement across the city.
4. To request a future update report which includes consideration of how to mitigate the impact of leaving the European Union (EU); since EU funding is currently provided.
5. To request that a briefing note on Tree Preservation Order's (TPO's) is provided to ward co-ordination. The briefing note should include information on how the Council treats itself in terms of TPO's and trees in back gardens.

NESC/17/04 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan and Emissions Report

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods). The Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2016-20 was approved by the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee in July 2016. Progress is monitored by an annual report and quarterly updates which provide emissions data and progress updates on the actions stated in the plan. An additional 6 monthly report was requested by the Committee which included benchmarking against other local authorities / cities; a description of the activities to encourage green procurement; and information on wider partner activity such as engagement with schools and housing providers. The Head of Policy Partnerships and Research introduced the report across its main themes. He described the work the Council had done to support ethical procurement advising that a launch event for the Council's new Ethical Procurement Policy was planned for 28 February 2017. The Policy and Partnerships Manager reported that the data analysis with other Core Cities was still ongoing since each local authority used different baselines; however he advised he could supply an update on this once further information was received.

The Committee welcomed Robin Lawlor from Northwards Housing. Robin Lawlor described the Decent Homes Programme which is a technical standard for public housing introduced by the government which includes measures to make properties more energy efficient. Robin Lawlor added that Northwards Housing had gone beyond this standard by attracting £8 million of additional external investment which they had matched with funding from the Capital Housing Programme. He described the collaborative work that was ongoing with other social landlords in respect of improvements to efficiency measures and in respect of education and behaviour change. He said that all Northwards Housing Staff had completed training in carbon literacy and that Northwards had reached their 40% carbon reduction in 2014 which was 6 years earlier than initially planned. Members welcomed the progress made by Northwards.

The Chair welcomed Marc Hudson, a member of the public who had requested permission to speak at the meeting. Marc Hudson stressed the importance of carbon literacy. He advised he had recently emailed all Manchester councillors to enquire whether they, their colleagues and ward plans were carbon literate and encouraged members to respond. He said that he felt the activities of the steering group for Manchester a Certain Future (MACF) should be more transparent. He noted that the Council had committed to take action in 2009 in respect of Climate Change and challenged why the current report included reference to a Communications Plan. He noted the reduction in Council owned buildings and queried whether the carbon savings were real savings or simply related to reductions in the amount of buildings the Council operated. The Chair thanked Marc Hudson for his comments and requested that officers respond in the next update to Committee.

A member asked what the current situation was in relation to carbon literacy training. The Chair reminded members they had been consulted on their preferences at the November meeting. The Policy and Partnerships manager advised that following this he had met with the Executive Member for the Environment to agree the necessary

arrangements. He noted that the online training previously offered for Carbon Literacy was no longer available but bespoke face to face sessions were in the process of being developed in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University; in addition to the sessions for partners being advertised amongst Manchester Councillors. The Executive Member for the Environment said that she was now the Council's Carbon Literacy Champion and the training should be widely available and offered to Council staff and residents of Manchester in addition to Councillors. Members agreed that it was important that dates be confirmed as soon as possible; and it would be preferable for the Committee to attend the training together.

A member queried the timeline for making street-lighting more energy efficient. The Executive Member for Environment explained that whilst there had been some delays in signing the new contract she assured members that this had now been factored in to ensure targets would still be met. A member asked which multiplier had been used to calculate the procurement spend referenced within the report. The Head of Policy and Partnership advised he would respond to the member directly regarding this.

Members discussed Council owned buildings. A member asked whether the reduction made in carbon emissions was a real reduction or as a result of reductions to Council owned properties. The Chair advised that Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee scrutinised Corporate Property and had recently received a report on this which could be shared with members, to which the Committee agreed. In response to a member's query the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods) advised that a Climate Change Reduction Plan was in place for the Council's operational estate which included things like the introduction of combined heat and power plants to Leisure Facilities. She assured members that environmental considerations would be made in respect of the refurbishment of the Town Hall; for example whether heritage LED lighting could be used.

A member asked about Council owned buildings being transferred to community organisations; which is scrutinised by Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee. The member noted that some Council owned buildings required works to bring them up to standard which many voluntary and community organisations could not afford to do. She enquired whether funding was available to organisations to support reductions in climate change. The Head of Policy and Partnerships advised that the Council was working on this. He said there was no specific funding but that they could identify appropriate funding available through other schemes; for example some initiatives under the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy would have implications for reducing carbon emissions. The Executive Member for the Environment stressed the Council's commitment to collaborating with the Voluntary and Community Sector; particularly in the context of the Council's 'Our Manchester' Strategy. Robin Lawlor advised he was the Trustee of the Carbon Literacy Trust charity. He described a conference hosted by Manchester Cathedral in November 2016 which consisted of faith groups sharing information and good practice, in particular in respect of buildings which were not carbon efficient.

Members discussed benchmarking. A member asked why some local authorities had interim targets and whether this was an efficient use of resources. The Policy and Partnerships Manager explained that since different local authorities had

different baselines their targets were met at different points. He offered to provide a future update on this. The Chair asked for further information on the work ongoing in other European Cities; for example the use of Cargo Bikes to aid reductions in carbon emissions. The Chair asked that the update include reference to this.

Members discussed communications. The Executive Member for the Environment advised that she had requested this be added as the Council did not promote enough the work it was already doing. Marc Hudson welcomed her comments however still felt a target for Councillors completing Carbon Literacy training was required. The Executive Member for the Environment responded that once the new training programme was confirmed she expected all Councillors to complete this. The Chair requested that the Communications and Engagement Plan in respect of Carbon Literacy be provided to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee for information once complete.

Decisions:

1. To request a future update once the analysis with other Core Cities is complete. To include consideration of initiatives in other European Cities, including the use of Cargo Bikes to reduce emissions.
2. To request that the Committee Support Officer circulate the information provide to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee on Corporate Property to members.
3. To request that the Communications and Engagement Plan for Carbon Literacy be provided to Committee for information once finalised.
4. To request that dates for the new Carbon Literacy Training be circulated once confirmed. Members agreed that it was important that dates be confirmed with all Councillors as soon as possible; and for a date to be arranged, convenient to members, where the Committee could attend the training together.

NESC/17/05 The use of glyphosate for controlling weeds

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods). The report set out the current position regarding the use of Glyphosate for controlling weeds in Manchester and the alternative options considered. The Committee welcomed the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and the Head of Commissioning who introduced the report across its main themes. He added that he was accompanied by Health and Safety Officers to answer members queries.

Members noted concern that the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the Food Standards Agency held different views on the safety of Glyphosate. The Chair summarised his understanding of the report which was that Glyphosate was considered safe to use at the current time but that work was ongoing at a European level to investigate this. He added that the product was the most cost effective and effective; but there were viable alternatives should it become clear that there was a

health risk. A member asked if there had been any reports to health and safety of any council staff or members of the public that had been injured or experienced illness resulting from the use of Glyphosate; to which Health and Safety Officers confirmed there hadn't.

Members held a detailed discussion regarding the alternatives available and challenged officers on why these products or methods were not used instead. In respect of Chikara officers advised that it had to be used correctly; for example not washed away as it could affect aquatic animals. The time period Chikara remained active was longer than Glyphosate so sensitivity was required, for example it was not appropriate for use in Children's Play Areas. In response to member's queries regarding why consideration was not given to weed strippers and brushes officers advised that these were resource intensive and required more manpower to operate. A member stressed the importance of using natural alternatives where possible and challenged whether the Council needed to carry out as much weed control as it did noting that some weeds could be beneficial, for example encouraging the bee population within the city. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods offered to pick up this suggestion as part of the 'Our Manchester' approach and said he would investigate whether weed rippers and brushes could be used in certain areas of the city to encourage wildflowers and bees.

Members queried why costs had not been included in the report and requested a detailed breakdown of these. The Head of Commissioning said the costs of administering Glyphosate were in the tens of thousands. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods added that it was difficult to provide an accurate breakdown and comparison of costs without expending considerable officer resource on this. He explained that various products and methods were not directly comparable; as different products required different frequencies of application or levels of manpower. However if the European Commission decided that Glyphosate was no longer suitable then more officer resource would be allocated to respond to this. He added that a rough estimate could be worked through and provided to members for information; to which the Chair agreed.

Decisions:

1. To note the report
2. To note that the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods would explore the possibility for natural alternatives to weed control in appropriate areas of the city in line with the 'Our Manchester' approach.
3. To request that the Head of Commissioning provide a rough estimate of comparable costs for weed control to be circulated to members for information.

NESC/17/06 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future

work programme.

The Chair noted that some items would need to be deferred from the meeting on 31 January to the meeting on 28 February 2017. The Committee agreed to defer the requested presentations from external organisations.

Decision:

To note the report and approve the work programme.