

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017

Present:

Councillor Paul – in the Chair

Councillors Akbar, Azra Ali, Shaukat Ali, Appleby, Hughes, Igbon, Kirkpatrick, Leech, Rawson and Sadler

Councillor N Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor B Priest, Deputy Leader

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for the Environment

Apologies: Councillors Chohan, Ludford and Noor

NESC/17/44 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2017 as a correct record.
2. To note the minutes of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group meeting of 12 September 2017.

NESC/17/45 Highways Planned Maintenance Programme 2017 – 2018

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering. The report described that in December 2015 the Council's Executive adopted a Highway Management Policy and Strategy setting out the principles by which any future investment would be prioritised. The strategy was used to draft a 5 year investment strategy (from 2017 to 2022) which was approved by Executive as part of the 2017/22 budget setting. The 5 year strategy set out how £80 million investment in Highways would lead to an improvement in the condition of the city's highways. This report sought approval for the Highways Planned Maintenance 2017 – 2018 Programme. The Committee were invited to comment on this proposal before it was to be submitted for approval by the Executive.

The Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering introduced the report and responded to Members' questions. He informed the Committee that this was the beginning of a five year programme of work and that subsequent years would include all wards. He said that he welcomed Members comments and suggestions regarding future works in year 2 of the project. He said that there would also be a consultation on years 2 and 3.

He said that the programme of work was designed to maximise impact and the quality of the work was closely monitored. He said the strategic plan was to address the key route networks in the city and then to consider the community network of

highways. He said that when work was scheduled to be undertaken this would be communicated to Members, residents and local traders.

He informed the Committee that future consideration would be giving to delivering preventative work to concrete slab roads that exist across the city.

The Executive Member for the Environment informed the Committee that it had been a challenge to get this process started and thanked residents and Members for their valuable contribution to help influence and prioritise this programme of work. She said that she would report annually on this activity and this would help build the case for additional investment into the highways of the city.

Decision

The Committee endorsed the recommendation to the Executive that:

It was recommended that the programme of works in in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 were approved and that allocations were also made for drainage works and large patch repairs as detailed within this report.

NESC/17/46 Highway Maintenance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering. The report provided the Committee with an update on the Highways Delivery Plan, including information on changes to the management of Highways and the progress made in delivering its Highways Maintenance investment and Gully Cleansing Drainage Programme.

The Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering introduced the report and responded to Members' questions. In response to questions regarding gullies he said the inspection programme would result in each gully being assessed and then assigned a unique reference number, the gully would then be designated either a subsequent 6 monthly or annual maintenance inspection.

Members commented upon the standard of work undertaken by private contractors when utility work had been undertaken, in particular Virgin Media. The Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering acknowledged that this was an issue and that he held regular meetings with Virgin Media to seek to address this. A Member commented that if they were unwilling or unable to repair the highways to a satisfactory standard the Council should undertake this work and recharge the utility company. The Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering said that he welcomed Members' feedback if they encounter problems within their ward. He said that the Highways Department did work closely with both developers and utility companies to understand their programme of work so work could be planned in an appropriate manner.

Members commented upon the debris left on carriage and pathways following jet patching of surfaces. The Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering said that jet patching would also repair those works that were not deemed as

actionable when they attend a repair job. He said this was a proactive and cost effective approach and said that the schedule of clearing and sweeping of areas following repair work could be better communicated to local residents.

In response to a question the Strategic Director Transport, Highways and Engineering said that 100% of repair work was currently inspected before contractors were paid. He said as confidence in the repair work increased the number of inspections could reduce to 75% or 80%. He said the work described within the report was a strategy to address the issue of back logs of work that could potentially expose the Council to risk.

Members discussed the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for repair works to be undertaken once reported. Members requested that future reports included an analysis of the number of repair jobs reported per month and how long it was taking to resolve each job, and how this compares to the SLA.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To request that a future update report includes an analysis of the number of highway repair jobs reported per month and how long each is taking to resolve each job, and how this compares to the Service Level Agreement.

NESC/17/47 Final Report and Recommendations of the Air Quality Task and Finish Group

The Chair announced that this report would be deferred to the November meeting of the Committee.

Decision

To defer consideration of this item to the November meeting of the Committee.

NESC/17/48 Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Performance and Disposal Savings

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods. The report provided Members with an update on the progress of the Biffa contract following the implementation of a 6 month Improvement Plan in January 2017 and subsequent extension of the improvement plan in August 2017, it further provided an update on service changes to waste collections from 4 bin households and the apartment sector to achieve collections and disposal savings targets. The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report.

Members welcomed the report and commented that they had witnessed improvements in street cleaning, especially at weekends; after specific events and

tackling fly tipping hot spots. The Director of Neighbourhoods said that the delivery of the contract continued to be monitored, with joint inspections undertaken with Biffa.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that he thanked the residents of the city for their cooperation with the changes to the bin collection. He said that this had resulted in a significant saving that had allowed for investment in other areas, such as highways improvement work. In response to a comment from a Member he said that those residents who had difficulties retrieving their bins after collection could request assisted collections.

Members then discussed the issue of recycling rates in apartment blocks. The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services informed the Committee that work continued to improve these rates. She said that they were looking at good practice in other blocks and were seeking to work with building managers and registered providers to influence behaviour change with their tenants; support recycling and reduce the levels of residual waste. She said that this was challenging as each block was designed differently.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that the planning process and planning policy could be used to address this issue in new builds, however the challenge remained with older, established apartment blocks. In response to a comment from a Member he said he would look at how best to report this to the Committee in future update reports. He said that consideration would also be given to deploying canvassing teams, similar to those that had been used successfully to engage with residents prior to the change of bin size.

In response to a question from a Member regarding weeding the Director of Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that Biffa had appointed a new subcontractor to undertake this activity. She said robust arrangements had been agreed to ensure that where spraying was not effective, weeds would be removed by hand.

In response to questions regarding the timing of leaf clearing the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that the commencement of this activity would always be subject to seasonal variation. The Strategic Lead: Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services said the timing of this activity was based on previous years and teams were working with Highways and Neighbourhoods Teams. She said that Biffa had extra leaf clearing vehicles and trained staff to operate these and would be adopting double shift patterns to undertake this work. She said that this programme of work included the clearing of cycle lanes.

In response to a comment from a Member, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that information that was provided on the web regarding cleaning schedules would be reviewed so that residents can access this information.

The Chair commented that consideration needed to be given to clearing cycling lanes of all debris such as ice and grit, not just leaves as these can cause a hazard to cyclists.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To request that any update report includes specific information on the cleaning of cycle lanes and the use of Planning Policy to increase recycling rates in new developments.

NESC/17/49 Selective Licensing Update

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Housing and Residential Growth. The report described that previous reports to the Committee on 6 Dec 2016 and 21 June 2017 had provided an update on the implementation of the pilot Landlord Selective Licensing (SL) scheme approved at Executive on 29 June 2016, and detailed feedback on the extensive consultation exercise completed in parts of Crumpsall, Moss Side and Rusholme to establish whether the declaration of a SL scheme was required. Since the last update a further round of consultation had been completed in Moston and Old Moat which was detailed in the report. The Director of Housing and Residential Growth introduced the report.

In response to Members' questions the Director of Housing and Residential Growth informed the Committee that when hazards were identified during a property inspection these were followed up. The Strategic Lead, Community Safety, Compliance and Enforcement advised that the administration of the scheme, including stock condition surveys was self-financing. She said that there was an enforcement process to follow which could ultimately result in a formal prosecution of those landlords failing to apply for a license.

The Director of Housing and Residential Growth said that intelligence gathering had been undertaken with the Council Tax Unit to identify landlords and property owners.

Members welcomed the report and said that the consultation exercise had been very positive with a lot of resident involvement. The Director of Housing and Residential Growth said that a designation to licence an area lasted for a period of five and then a decision would be taken as to if the scheme was still required in a specific area. Members commented that the scheme should be rolled out to other areas in the city. In response the Director of Housing and Residential Growth said that any decision to designate an area for a SL scheme would need to be evidenced based.

The Deputy Leader said that the Government did not support any scheme to regulate this sector of the housing market and protect vulnerable tenants. He said that this was evident as the Government had still to publish the findings of the Houses in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reforms consultation exercise that had concluded in December 2016. He said that Landlord organisations were currently lobbying government to stop such schemes, however he was determined to resist this and protect tenants in the private rented sector.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. The Committee shall receive a report on the Houses in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reforms consultation exercise when the findings have been published by the Government.

NESC/17/50 Overview Report

The 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.

A member requested that an update on the development of the Social Lettings Agency is included in the Housing report to be considered at the November meeting.

Decision

To note the report and approve the work programme subject to the above.