

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2018

Present:

Councillor Paul – in the Chair

Councillors Akbar, Azra Ali, Shaukat Ali, Appleby, Chohan, Hughes, Igbon, Kirkpatrick, Leech, Longsdon, Noor and Rawson

Councillor N Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for the Environment

Jonny Sadler, Programme Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

Dr Anna Gilchrist, Lecturer in Environmental Management and Ecology, The University of Manchester

Dr Gina Cavan, Senior Lecturer in Geographic Information System and Climate, Manchester Metropolitan University

Apologies: Councillor Sadler

NESC/18/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017 as a correct record.

NESC/18/02 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy - Report on progress

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Development and the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods that updated Members on the progress that had been made by both the Council and external stakeholders towards delivering the actions and achieving the objectives of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- The relationship between the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the specific Our Manchester strategy aims;
- The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Implementation Plan;
- The link between the Tree Action Plan and the delivery of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan; and
- Examples of Key Delivery Highlights and Council actions.

The Committee welcomed Dr Anna Gilchrist from the University of Manchester (UoM), Dr Gina Cavan Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and Jonny Sadler Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA), who advised the Committee that:-

- The Manchester Green and Blue Group had enabled a wide range of groups and organisations to come together, network, share experience and knowledge;
- UoM had recently won three bids to undertake research into the links between G&BI and health outcomes, ageing population and growth and new developments;
- UoM had established a volunteer programme and conservation society (Tree Muskateers) for students, which had provided invaluable experience in relation to developing practical skills, developing policies, networking and understanding challenges that made them much more employable and helped retain knowledge within the city;
- MMU had undertaken an extensive research programme to understand the extent and use of garden spaces across the city and the findings of this research would be published in February 2018;
- The G&BI Strategy had accelerated activity across the city and the Our Manchester approach had driven this programme to work collaboratively and inclusively with a range of stakeholders and residents.
- The establishment of the Manchester Green and Blue Group provided a platform to ensure the continued delivery of this strategy; and
- The work of the group had developed to incorporate a wider understanding of the impact of G&B on issues such as air quality; health, flood prevention and social cohesion which was gaining national and international recognition.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:

- The need to work closely with new developments and the planning process to protect the natural environment;
- What is being done to manage those larger trees on pavements that could present hazards;
- Accessibility of waterways, especially for disabled residents;
- How is the voluntary work of students influencing and upskilling residents;
- The Committee sought clarification on how the Parks Investment Programme of £20.5m was allocated across all of the parks within the city;
- The Committee asked for a breakdown of activity across all of the wards;
- The management of waterways, especially in regard to the removal of debris;
- Acknowledgement of the important role of friends groups to support and maintain parks and green spaces; and
- The report did not detail the measures of what had been achieved.

The Senior Policy Officer advised that Transport for Greater Manchester were developing a project to deliver a scheme to improve green connectivity and improve the number of journeys undertaken by walking. It was reported that of the £20.5m Parks Investment Programme, not all of this was destined for Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park with £3m to be invested in other parks across the city. He also informed the Committee that work was ongoing with other Local Authorities to develop a tree management programme. In response to the issues raised regarding canals he acknowledged the comments in relation to access and advised that this was being looked into and in regard to the issue example given of cleaning he agreed to take this up with the appropriate body. It was reported that the Manchester Parks Strategy 2017 – 2026 adopted a team Manchester approach to support friends

groups and this had been considered by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager advised that discussions regarding Green and Blue design were undertaken with developers and made reference to the Northern Gateway development that included this as a key element of the design. He informed the Committee that the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy would be embedded into the Residential Design Guidelines. He said that the report provided an overview of the work undertaken around this activity however he reassured the Committee that work went on city wide and information regarding local projects could be provided via ward coordination.

Dr Gilchrist advised that the Green Growth research project would specifically look at the issue of planning and development and the findings of this project would inform guidance. She further described that the 'Tree Muskateers' worked with local community groups to co-design and deliver projects, and said that she would welcome any suggestions from Members of any local volunteering opportunities that could benefit from the work of the student group.

The Strategic Director, Development suggested that this report was considered by the Committee on an annual basis and the next report would better capture and report measurable outcomes.

Decision

1. To note the report and thank all of the guests for attending the meeting and responding to Members questions.
2. The Committee recommended that the next update report include information on measurable outcomes and provide information on activity at a ward level.

NESC/18/03 Clean City

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods and received a presentation which highlighted the outputs delivered by the Clean City project and the impact these had had on residents and the environment in terms of sustainable improvements and behaviour change.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- An overview of the Clean and Green initiative;
- Information on the funding arrangements;
- Information on completed projects and an overview of achievements in city wide infrastructure, communities and neighbourhoods, schools, greening strategy, parks and community spaces and district centres;
- An analysis and assessment of value for money; and
- Case studies and a description of the outcomes and impacts of this initiative.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:

- Members commented on the positive impact projects had made to their local communities;
- Clarification was sought regarding who was responsible for determining the location of on-street bins;
- What had been the impact of this initiative on levels of fly tipping and gully cleaning;
- What impact had this project had on levels of foot fall in district centres and resident satisfaction; and
- Clarification was sought on how much funding had been spent to date and the length of time taken to complete some projects.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods expressed his gratitude to all of the residents and Members who had been involved in, and contributed to the successful delivery of projects that had benefited their local community.

The Director of Neighbourhoods advised that Clean City was not a service, however, the one off activity generated through projects had stimulated further investment, and provided an example of investment made in the Council's Highways network. It was reported that Clean City had helped with community clean ups, but Officers acknowledged that fly tipping remained a challenge. The Director of Neighbourhoods reassured the Committee that incidents of fly tipping would continue to be investigated and where possible perpetrators would be prosecuted.

In response to the question regarding District Centres, the Director of Neighbourhoods advised that the investment made via Clean City had delivered physical improvements resulting in District Centres becoming more attractive for people to visit. She said the analysis of the outcomes of this would be revisited and accepted that it could be difficult to capture satisfaction levels, especially in those areas with a large transient population, however teams remained committed to working with residents to improve their neighbourhoods.

The Head of Commissioning and Delivery informed the Committee that as of November 2017, £12.2m had been spent, and there was a number of projects still outstanding. The Director of Neighbourhoods advised that there were a number of projects that would take longer to deliver due to the nature of the project, such as the removal of Japanese Knotweed.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods commented that the decisions taken where to locate on-street bins was the decision of the Council and not the contractor.

In response to a question regarding the levels of resident satisfaction, the Performance, Research and Intelligence Officer - Place and Core advised that this data was available and would be shared with the Committee.

Decision

1. To note the report and welcome the outputs and outcomes described to date, and those still to be delivered.

2. The Committee requests that future reports provide a geographical breakdown of where projects had been delivered.

[Councillors Appleby declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as an employee of the Manchester College and her partner is employed by Biffa.]

NESC/18/04 Review of Public Bowling Greens

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that provided information in relation to the savings option put forward and the work undertaken to evaluate future operational delivery models and cost savings to Bowling Green maintenance, in order to deliver the £100k savings proposed from April 2018.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- Current service provision;
- Usage statistics and income received;
- Maintenance costs;
- Outcome of consultation with MCC bowling clubs; and
- Future proposals

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:

- Members commented that the consultation exercise had been comprehensive and asked what had been done to contact those clubs who had not responded;
- Clarification was sought regarding the level of savings agreed; and
- Further information on the proposals for the winter pitch.

The Head of Commissioning and Delivery advised that every attempt had been made to engage with those clubs who had not responded to the consultation. He reported that this had included an extension to the consultation period and clubs were visited by officers in addition to telephone calls and letters. He said that a further consultation exercise would be undertaken with regard to the future location of the proposed winter pitch. In response to the question regarding budgets it was reported that the £17k budget saving shortfall would be found from within the overall Growth and Neighbourhoods budget for 2018/19.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. The Committee welcomes the success in retaining a large proportion of this service.

NESC/18/05 Leaf Removal Update

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods, presented by the Director of Neighbourhoods, which provided an update on the leaf removal programme; an overview of the approach taken this year and a review of the progress made so far.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- Issues in relation to the consistency of cleanliness of streets across the City from Biffa (the service provider) during the 2016/17 programme;
- The changes that had been made by Biffa following the introduction of their 'Service Improvement Plan' in February 2017;
- The 2017/18 programme had seen greater co-ordination with Members, Highways, Grounds Maintenance, Neighbourhood Teams and Contact Centre to ensure the approach was understood, progress against the programme clearly monitored and that there was flexibility to respond to localised issues when needed;
- Following feedback from Members, there had been closer scrutiny of Biffa's performance around cycle lanes; and
- Whilst performance was better than last year, there were still a number of areas of the programme where improvements could be made

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:

- What levels of flexibility was there within the service to undertake leaf cleaning at times when there is reduced on-street parking, such as bank holidays;
- Ongoing issues with clearing those streets that experience a lot of on-street parking and obstructions caused by nearby construction work that prevented cleaning crews being able to access streets; and
- The cleaning of cycle lanes, especially those with shared footways.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that there had been a significant improvement in this area of activity compared to previous years. He said that he was committed to working with the contractor, Biffa to address any issues to continue to deliver this service and he thanked Biffa and Members for their work in this area.

The Director of Neighbourhoods said that she welcomed the feedback from Members and that the issue of car parking needed to be reviewed as this did not only effect leaf clearing and good practice would be reviewed to best address this issue. She said that they would continue to work with Neighbourhood teams to review this and a lessons learnt workshop would be organised to review activity and plan for the future.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. The Committee welcomes the commitment given to improving arrangements to address the issue of cleaning commuter and residential parking areas and cycle ways and footways.

NESC/18/06 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

The Committee agreed to defer the report from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods to the meeting of 31 January 2018.

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Member for the Environment, Councillor Stogia, which provided an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester.

Councillor Stogia thanked Members for their support and welcomed the challenge provided by the Scrutiny Committee.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:

- The implementation of resident parking schemes;
- The importance of climate change at a ward level;
- The implementation of the recommendations of the Road Safety Around Schools;
- Was the 10% Cycle City Ambition Grant achievable;
- Any future report should address how the work and activity of the Executive Member incorporated the Our Manchester Strategy; and
- What were the Executive Member's priorities for the next six months.

Cllr Stogia responded by advising that resident parking schemes were being progressed and business cases were currently being prepared. In response to a specific question regarding a scheme in Rusholme she said she would discuss this with the Member outside of the meeting.

Cllr Stogia welcomed the investigation undertaken by the Air Quality Task and Finish Group and work was ongoing on the implementation of the final recommendations, and an update report on this would be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time. She said that she would seek to implement the recommendations of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group once the work of the group had concluded.

Cllr Stogia advised that she was confident that the 10% target of the Cycle City Ambition Grant, whilst challenging, was still achievable. She said a lot of work was ongoing both locally and at a Greater Manchester level by the Mayor and Chris Boardman, the appointed Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking Commissioner, to promote cycling as a viable alternative to the car.

In response to the question as to her priorities for the next six months Councillor Stogia reported she had identified highways and potholes; skills and keeping the city moving as her priorities. In response to a comment from a Member who said that he had requested the list of roads that had been approved for scheduled highways work she said she would send this directly to the Member.

The Committee were informed that the skills element of the Executive Members portfolio was regularly reported to the Economy Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

1. The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods to the meeting of 31 January 2018.
2. To note the report and the progress on a wide range of important services and policies.
3. The Committee welcomes the opportunities to comment on Highway Priorities in years 2 to 5.
4. To recommend that future reports provide a full evaluation of progress in implementing the Our Manchester principals within each remit.

NESC/18/07 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 a report on Dog Control Orders and a report on the use of Glyphosate in parks and open spaces be considered at the 31 January 2018 meeting. Noting that the Committee had earlier agreed to receive the report 'Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy' from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods at the 31 January meeting, the Chair recommended that the reports on Housing Retrofit and Local energy solutions and renewable energy solutions that were listed for 31 January be deferred to the meeting of 28 February to accommodate these additional reports.

The Committee agreed this recommendation.

Decision

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