

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2018

Present:

Councillor Paul – in the Chair

Councillors Akbar, Appleby, Hughes, Leech, Noor, Rawson and Sadler

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment

Apologies: Councillors Azra Ali, Shaukat Ali, Igbon and Kirkpatrick

NESC/18/16 Minutes

The minutes of the 31 January 2018 were submitted for approval. Councillor Akbar requested that his apologies be recorded.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2018 as a correct record subject to the above amendment.

NESC/18/17 Housing Retrofit

The Chair informed the Committee that he had invited Charlie Baker from Redd.coop and Professor James Evans from University of Manchester to deliver presentations around the issue of housing retrofit. He said he had invited them both to address the Committee to help Members scope any future update report from officers.

Mr Baker's presentation covered:

- The context of global warming;
- An analysis of the current housing stock and the impact on carbon emissions of building new homes;
- Providing a description and definition of what a retrofit was, both in terms of domestic and non domestic buildings;
- Data on the benefits of retrofit;
- Information on the associated costs; and
- Regional and local economic benefits of this activity.

Professor Evans' presentation covered the role and design of the city as an agent for addressing climate change.

Members asked if the regeneration of Ben Street would incorporate the features that had been described by Mr Baker. The Director of Housing and Residential Growth said that the priority for the Ben Street regeneration had been to bring empty properties back into use and this was to be achieved at significant cost. He said that funding remained a challenge.

Decision

The Committee notes the presentations.

NESC/18/18 Local energy solutions and renewable energy solutions

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods that provided an update on local energy and renewable energy solutions in Manchester and Greater Manchester (GM).

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

- Framing the report in the context of the UK energy market that was moving towards decarbonisation as part of wider strategies to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of climate change;
- How Manchester City Council was seeking to develop local energy solutions involving renewable energy, particularly through cooperation with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA);
- Information on the current Manchester City Council Renewable Energy / Low Carbon Schemes;
- Information on the 'GM Big Clean Switch', a collaboration between the 10 GM Councils to encourage a greater take up with energy companies developing renewable gas and electricity solutions;
- Information on the Business Growth Hub that provided a tailored support and guidance to help small and medium sized enterprises reduce energy use and increase their knowledge of, and support for green education initiatives;
- Information on the development of a model to deliver a GM Energy Enterprise to deliver low carbon, renewable energy beyond 2020. Consideration currently being given for GMCA adopting a leadership role to ensure the local energy system could be decarbonised, digitized and decentralised; and
- The impact of this area of work in stimulating economic activity and the creation of new jobs at a local and regional level.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- Was there an agreed action plan with clearly defined targets that could be viewed;
- What consideration had been given to generating local energy and in particular what progress had been made with the Devonshire Street plans to capture the local geothermal energy;
- What consideration had been given to developing a local energy company, both acting as an energy company and energy provider, and what are the challenges associated with any such proposal; and
- How many residents had taken advantage of the 'GM Big Clean Switch'.

The Principal Policy Officer informed the Committee that the GM Green Summit scheduled for 21 March 2018 would inform an action plan with clearly defined objectives that would be subsequently published and shared. He advised that the Devonshire Street Geo Thermal project had received planning consent however the commercial developer had subsequently withdrawn from the project for commercial

reasons. He said alternative options and locations are being sought and would be considered as to their viability. He commented that by considering options at a GM level presented an opportunity to deliver larger schemes and maximise the economy of scale by working across the ten local authorities.

The GM Green Summit would also consider options for developing a GM Energy Company as there were significant financial risks associated with developing a local scheme due to the competition within the market and license costs of approximately £3m. He said conversations would be had with those local authorities who had established an energy company to learn from their experience, he said any future venture would need to be delivered carefully to mitigate any financial risk and for any such scheme to be viable it would require at least 60,000 plus residents purchasing their energy from a GM Energy Company. In response to the question regarding the number of households who had taken advantage of the 'GM Big Clean Switch' he informed Members that he would circulate this information.

The Executive Member for Environment informed the Committee that across Greater Manchester there existed a thriving manufacturing and technical sector focused on clean energy solutions. She said that the Manchester Climate Change Board would be addressed by representatives from this sector with the ambition of stimulating engagement with business and communities to help deliver a carbon neutral city.

Decisions

The Committee-

1. note the report and welcomes the development of local and renewable energy solutions;
2. requests that the Principal Policy Officer circulate to Members information on the number of households that had taken advantage of the 'GM Big Clean Switch'.
3. welcomes the move towards engaging with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the energy market.

NESC/18/19 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.

The Chair informed Members that the May meeting of the Committee would include an Annual Work Programming Session, where Members would hear from the Strategic Lead and Lead Officers on the upcoming issues that fall within the Committee's remit. Members would then be invited to nominate items for consideration at future meetings of the Committee.

Decision

To note the report.