

## **Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24 June 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Igbon (Chair) – in the Chair

**Councillors:** Appleby, Butt, Flanagan, Foley, Hassan, Holt, Hughes, Jeavons, Lyons, Razaq, Sadler and Wright

**Apologies:** Councillor Chohan, Lynch and Shilton Godwin

**Also present:**

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

#### **ECCSC/21/5 Minutes**

The Chair requested that Councillor Chohan's apologies be recorded in the minutes of the previous meeting

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

#### **ECCSC/21/6 Manchester's Park Strategy - Progress through the Pandemic**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of Manchester's Park Strategy and the considerations for the Parks Service following the ongoing impacts of the global pandemic. The report set out the focus for the service over the next 6 months and outlined how momentum is being maintained on the delivery of the strategic themes despite the significant financial challenges caused by a reduction in permitted activity and trading.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- Providing an introduction and background to the strategy, highlighting the four key themes of the ten-year strategy for Manchester's Parks;
- Noting that progress updates on the delivery of the Park Strategy had previously been reported to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee;
- Noting that during the last 15 months the priority for the service had been to maintain safe access to green space for the City's residents;
- An overview of the impact of the pandemic on service delivery;
- The financial impact of the pandemic;
- Information on the Parks Development Programme, that will see £12.5M of Manchester City Council funding utilised to attract new partnerships and support key stakeholder groups to continue to close the gap between operating costs and income raised through enhanced trading activity in parks;

- Plans and initiatives for the next six months; and
- Information relating to a Manchester Quality Standard and the Productive Parks in Partnership fund.

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

- The Committee thanked officers and staff working in parks for their work during the pandemic, noting that the service had undertaken a restructure during this period;
- Noting how important green space had been to residents' health and wellbeing during this challenging period;
- The parks offer needed to be standardised and consistent across all wards;
- Consideration needed to be given to advertising planned events in parks on notice boards at the entrance to parks;
- A report should be provided to the next meeting of the Committee that detailed all of the events planned in parks for the summer period;
- Welcoming the recent positive launch of the wellbeing garden in Didsbury and the positive contribution this would have for residents;
- Was the budget for parks increasing this year as a result of savings made in the previous year due to cancelled events;
- Noting The Year of Childhood, a year-long celebration of childhood running throughout 2021 events should be delivered in parks in those wards that experienced poverty and deprivation;
- Consideration needed to be given to installing individual recycling bins within parks;
- Clarification was sought as to the use of pesticides, particularly the use of glyphosate to manage weeds,
- Access and proximity to parks and green space should be mapped;
- Safety in parks needed to be appropriately considered;
- Sustainable travel to access green spaces should be encouraged and promoted;
- A register should be established that identified who owned and had responsibility for areas of land across the city;
- Cycle routes should be established to enable people to access cycling hubs and other cycling related facilities by bicycle;
- Planning policy should be used to maximise the delivery of green space, noting the successful delivery of the Mayfield scheme;
- Contractors should not use pesticides;
- What consideration had been given to introducing electric vehicles across the parks maintenance fleet;
- Information that was available on the Council's website needed to be regularly reviewed so that all relevant information relating to a ward, including park related information was current and correct; and
- A Member expressed his apologies, on behalf of himself and his fellow ward Councillors for the delays in delivering football pitches in his ward.

In response to discussion and questions the Parks Lead stated that the budget for parks was the same this year as in the previous year. She advised that there are approximately 100plus events per week delivered across parks in Manchester each

week, noting the impact that COVID has had on this programme of activity. She described that park plans had also continued to be developed throughout this period, engaging with residents and community groups. She stated that she welcomed Members comments and contribution to the development of park plans.

The Parks Lead described that The Year of Childhood was an opportunity to build up and deliver activities in parks and encourage young people's participation in park events. She described that a mapping exercise had been undertaken to consider access to parks, primarily around play areas and that Manchester was participating in a national study to understand access to green space. With regard to the issue of access to parks, she stated that generally this was very good however there was a commitment to engage with and work with local community groups and residents to address any barriers and find appropriate solutions. She made reference to the Community Renewal Fund Bid to support this and similar projects.

The Parks Lead continued by stating that one theme of the Park Planning process was to consider the promotion of active travel and how this could be supported such as by the provision of safe cycle parking and storage at correct locations. She further made reference to the Parks In Partnership Fund that allocated £30k per ward that could be bid for and if this was not an appropriate fund to bid for groups would be directed to other available sources of funding.

The Parks Lead stated that the Renewable Energy Team would use feasibility studies to consider all options and actions that could be taken to mitigate climate change, particularly around large scale events.

In response to the comment from a Member regarding his frustration and disappointment regarding the delivery of schemes in his ward, the Park Lead stated that she shared his disappointment and acknowledged that communications with local Councillors regarding the reasons for this needed to be improved, describing this had been as a result of challenges to the investment by external partners, adding further that delays could be experienced due to the complexities presented by specific sites. In regard to the issue of communications around parks and events more widely she stated that she acknowledged the comments raised by the Committee and would take that away from the meeting.

The Parks Lead stated that opportunities to increase the delivery and access to quality green space was considered when new schemes were being developed, making reference to the Mayfield and the Northern Gateway schemes and the positive contributions these would deliver.

In regard to the issue of identifying land ownership and responsibility the Parks Lead stated that access to this data needed to be accessible, adding that the CRM system should direct any enquiries submitted to the appropriate service and team for a response.

The Director of Commercial and Operations advised that glyphosate had not been used in parks since 2019, except in exceptional controlled circumstances when they were required to remove invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed. He stated that Grounds Maintenance who managed the street scene had minimal use of

pesticides and Biffa who were responsible for streets used glyphosate for weed control. He advised that cemeteries did use weed control and alternative methods of weed control were being considered an update report would be provided to the Committee later in the year. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that if residents in a neighbourhood stated they did not want Biffa to use glyphosate in their neighbourhood this request would be respected.

The Director of Commercial and Operations advised the Committee that currently there was no electric vehicle alternative to those that were required by the parks fleet, however as the market responded to this contracts and commissioning would be used to ensure that such vehicles were used.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised that the rubbish that was collected in parks was subsequently sorted for appropriate recycling and acknowledged that this fact needed to be communicated to residents so that they were aware that this was done. He commented that research had shown that where individual recycling bins were installed they had resulted in contamination so needed to be manually sorted in any event.

The Chair commented upon positive engagement in her ward regarding litter picking in parks and paid tribute to the officer who had led on this. She stated this and the many other examples of good practice should be shared across all wards via ward coordination and that she would liaise with the Executive Member to discuss how best this could be coordinated.

## **Decisions**

The Committee recommend:-

1. All planned park events are advertised on notice boards at the entrance to parks;
2. That the Council website should be regularly reviewed to ensure that all information relating to a ward, including park related information was current and correct; and
3. A report should be provided to the next meeting of the Committee that detailed all of the events planned in parks for the summer period.

## **ECCSC/21/7 Introduction to the Neighbourhood Climate Change Officers**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided a summary of the progress since the three Climate Neighbourhood Officers were appointed in March and April 2021, how they were approaching their roles and initial areas which they had identified for development.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the posts had been established on a 2-year fixed term basis;
- The Climate Change Officers would give advice and direction and ensure that both Councillors and communities had support and information to develop locally based climate change initiatives;

- Describing their key tasks and their approach to work with local Neighbourhood Teams;
- Noting the commitment to strong partnership working and building upon extensive relationships with internal and external stakeholders and residents on the climate change agenda; and
- Identified areas for development.

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

- Welcoming the new Climate Change Officers and wishing them well in their new role;
- Officers needed to engage with local schools to promote and support climate change projects, ideally with a Climate Change Officer allocated to each ward;
- The need to engage with businesses to develop plans and targets to tackle their own emissions and this should be incorporated and reported via the Climate Change Action Plan as this was key to delivering the city's emissions target;
- Were all of the individual ward climate change action plans established;
- There was a need to meaningfully measure the outcomes and impact of the individual ward climate change action plans;
- An update was sought in relation to Carbon Literacy training and could this be brought inhouse to progress and deliver as quickly as possible;
- Was the Neighbourhood Investment Fund sufficient to drive forward this important area of work, noting that the Lottery Fund was significantly higher however complex to access; and
- Examples of good practice and local initiatives related to climate change should be shared across all wards via ward coordination.

The Head of Neighbourhoods stated that the climate change officers would be working with local schools and were members of the Schools Network. She advised that the officers would also progress this work by engaging with local businesses, especially those operating at a neighbourhood level and would seek to establish links with local trader organisations to progress this agenda.

The Chair stated that following discussions at the May 2021 meeting she would be meeting with the Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to agree the options for ensuring that climate change and young people was adequately addressed through the scrutiny process.

The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that it was recognised that working with a range of partners across the city was vital to deliver the climate change ambitions for the city. She said that these new posts would seek to compliment existing programmes rather than duplicate any existing work. She advised that the work to deliver ward climate change action plans continued to be progressed, noting that some wards had progressed further than others and the Strategic Lead (South) commented that work was underway with the Tyndall Centre to establish metrics by which the impact of each ward plan could be measured and reported. He advised that Members would be kept informed as that work progressed.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods commented that the Neighbourhood Investment Fund was important to help raise awareness and deliver climate change

and environmental projects in wards and he encouraged community groups to apply to this.

The Executive Member for Environment stated that the work of the local Neighbourhood Teams was important to establish relationships and dialogue with a range of partners to progress the actions required to address climate change. She commented that Carbon Literacy had been offered to all Members and encouraged all who had not undertaken this training to do so at the earliest opportunity. A member commented that all members of this Committee should be offered the Carbon Literacy Training in advance of the next meeting of the Committee. The Committee were also informed that the delivery of Carbon Literacy Training would be reported in the Climate Change Action Plan updates.

### **Decisions**

The Committee recommend that Carbon Literacy Training should be offered to all Members of the Committee in advance of the next meeting.

### **ECCSC/21/8 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 Committee recommended that report titled 'Planning and its contribution to address climate change' should be brought forward to the earliest possible meeting and this should include consideration of the policy in relation to developers being required to install electric vehicle charging points and the delivery for suitable cycle storage facilities. A request was also made for an item that considered the actions taken to reduce carbon emissions at Manchester Airport including an update on the progress made to reduce aviation related carbon emissions was added to the Work Programme as an item "to be scheduled".

### **Decision**

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme subject to the above comments.