

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 11 November 2021

Present: Councillor Igbon– in the Chair

Councillors: Flanagan, Foley, Hassan, Holt, Hughes, Jeavons, Lynch, Lyons, Razaq, Shilton Godwin and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Chohan

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Deputy Leader (Finance)
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Simcock, Member for Didsbury East Ward
Victoria Ryan, Business Partner, Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA)
Claire Nicholls, Flood Resilience Advisor, Environment Agency
Peter Costello, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Environment Agency
Lisa Lingard, Resident and Communities Programme Lead, Manchester Climate Change Agency

ECCSC/21/25 Urgent Business

The Chair introduced an item of urgent business by inviting Cllr Flanagan to address the Committee.

Cllr Flanagan stated that in mid-2021, a severe drought in southern Madagascar had caused hundreds of thousands of people, with some estimating more than one million people, to suffer from food insecurity and being on the verge of famine. He stated that this was as a direct result of climate change. He therefore called upon the Government to urgently address climate change and called upon all Members to support a motion that was being drafted on this issue to be considered by Council.

Cllr Flanagan stated that all reports being considered by any Committee should explicitly articulate how the item being considered contributed to the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. He further stated that following the budget setting process an audit should be undertaken to consider how each Scrutiny Committee had considered the issue of climate change as part of their deliberations, with due consideration given to how this information was articulated so that it was accessible to members of the public.

Decision

To note the statement from the Committee member.

ECCSC/21/26 Minutes

A Member requested that the list of all organisations in Manchester that had not signed up to the MCCA, and where available the reasons for not signing up was still outstanding. (See ECCSC/21/16 Manchester Climate Change Agency Progress Report 2021/22). The Scrutiny Support Officer was asked to follow up this request for information.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 as a correct record, subject to the above comment.

ECCSC/21/27 Neighbourhood Directorate Budget 2022/23

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that described that following the Spending Review announcements and other updates the Council was forecasting an estimated shortfall of £4m in 2022/23, £64m in 2023/24 and £85m by 2024/25. The report set out the high-level position and where Officers had identified options to balance the budget in 2022/23 which were subject to approval.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Describing that the Local Government Finance Settlement would be released in December 2021;
- A longer-term strategy to close the budget gap was being prepared with an estimated requirement to find budget cuts and savings in the region of £40m per annum for 2023/24 and 2024/25;
- Describing the priorities for the services within the remit of this committee, including those to address climate change, details on the initial revenue budget changes proposed by officers and the planned capital programme.

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

- Consideration needed to be given to continued funding for the Climate Change Officers posts; and
- Analysis needed to be undertaken to understand the cost if action to address climate change was not taken.

The Deputy Leader (Finance) said that as part of the budget setting process the Council would articulate where the Council used the budget to contribute and support the core aims of the Council, and this included the commitment to address climate change.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided the Members with an overview of the approach to flood prevention and management including:

Key points and themes in the report included:

- How this was coordinated locally and how this was delivered with neighbouring authorities that impacted on Manchester;
- Flood Risk Management and Resilience;
- Lessons learnt from previous recent events;
- Role of the Civil Contingencies Unit; and
- Information on the strategies and planning in relation to local reservoirs.

Accompanying the report, the Committee further received a presentation from the Environment Agency that provided an overview of the role and responsibilities of the agency. The Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Environment Agency concluded the presentation by advising that it was important for residents living in a flood risk area to sign up for flood alerts and to adhere to any advice given to evacuate a property. He stated that failure to do so could result in additional demands and pressures on the emergency services and present additional dangers to residents. He further commented that the Environment Agency would advise the Gold Command when it was necessary to evacuate an area.

The Members then heard from Councillor Simcock who addressed the Committee and spoke of his experience during Storm Christoph. He described that he had witnessed the event and had visited the control centre in Didsbury. He paid tribute to all of the staff working at the Environment Agency during the event. He further paid tribute to the response provided by Council officers, the emergency services, Didsbury mosque and Southway Housing. He commented that the regular clearing of gullies was important to prevent episodes of flooding and consideration needed to be given as to the location of evacuation centres to ensure they were appropriate and accessible for all residents. He recommended that the Committee should undertake a site visit to the flood management arrangements in the Goyt Valley. The Chair endorsed this recommendation.

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

- Welcoming the report and presentation, noting the benefits of partnership working;
- Noting the absence of the Canals and River Trust from the list of members of the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum;
- Noting the information provided relating to nature based solutions and requesting that further information be provided on these projects and information on how residents could get involved with such initiatives;
- Recognising the importance of coordinated and factual information provided to residents at times of flooding, referencing the lessons learnt during the pandemic on this issue;

- The importance of ensuring that any communications were appropriate, especially for vulnerable residents;
- How were sandbags distributed to residents;
- Where could residents obtain flood resilience advice and information to protect their properties;
- Information regarding the modelling used for future flood management plans was requested;
- Noting the increased incidents of surface water flooding and what was being done to address this;
- What work is being done to protect the Council's own housing stock against flooding; and
- The need to communicate to residents, particularly young people, the dangers and risks associated with contaminated flood water.

The Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Environment Agency stated that residents were involved with the nature based solutions projects, particularly supporting the ongoing maintenance of such schemes and he said that local Councillors would be contacted regarding local schemes. He stated that the modelling work for future plans was currently underway and could be shared with the Committee when available.

The Flood Resilience Advisor, Environment Agency welcomed the comments from the Committee and stated that she was willing to attend any resident events to speak on the issue of flood management. She commented that information was available for residents wishing to seek advice regarding home flood resilience measures, however the Environment Agency was unable to endorse any one product or service. She stated that residents should be directed to the Flood Hub website and the Blue Pages where information could be obtained. She further endorsed the comment regarding the need for factual information and recognised the importance of trusted key community contacts to disseminate this information at times of flooding.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety supported this statement and said that the Neighbourhood Teams were supporting the activity regarding improved communications with residents through the development of community flood resilience plans. She said that this was being done using all of the learning from Storm Christoph. She further noted the comments regarding the messaging on the issue of the dangers and risks associated with contaminated flood water and young people. She further reassured the Committee that the Canals and River Trust did assist with flood incidents, where appropriate, but they were not a Risk Management Authority or a Category 1 or 2 responder as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act and are not therefore required to undertake any specific civil protection duties under the Act. In respect of work being done to protect the Council's own housing stock from future flooding she agreed to raise this with the Director of Northwards.

The Head of Network Management advised that there were a limited number of sandbags available, and these were provided to the emergency services to deploy as they felt appropriate during incidents of flooding. He commented that there was a recognised demand from residents for sandbags and a policy on how to manage this demand was being considered to ensure it was equitable. He further commented that

the issue of surface flooding was recognised, and any new highways scheme was designed to account for the increased intensity of rain fall. The Business Partner, AGMA commented that the Multi-agency Flood Plan, specific to Manchester, was being reviewed and this had involvement from Highways. She said this would be shared with Members when this was finalised.

The Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Environment Agency concluded by noting the importance of partnership working to address flood management and this was clearly demonstrated in Manchester and he thanked the Members for the opportunity to present to the Committee.

Decisions

The Committee;

1. Recommend that Neighbourhood Teams review and strengthen the communication channels with residents around the issue of flooding and utilise local ward members as trusted community voices.
2. Recommend that priority should be given to the cleaning of gullies in those areas identified as being at risk of flooding.
3. Recommend that appropriate consideration is given to flood management on all future highways schemes.
4. That a visit be arranged for Members of the Committee to witness the flood management arrangements in the Goyt Valley.

ECCSC/21/29 Neighbourhood Teams In Developing Local Climate Change Activity

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided information on how the Neighbourhood Teams were supporting local communities to engage in local climate change activity and reduce carbon emissions.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An update on the In Our Nature programme pilot schemes;
- Describing the approach and outcomes of partnership working;
- Use of the Neighbourhood Investment Fund;
- Work of Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers including supporting development of wider partnership structures;
- Information on the delivery of active travel; and
- Describing the key elements that were required for the local approach to be successful.

In presenting the report the Head of Neighbourhood Management requested an amendment to the wording of paragraph 10.3 to read as follows;

'The 'Towards Inclusive Environmental Sustainability (TIES)' project based in the Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI) at the University of Manchester is researching how the knowledge and practices of immigrants from the Global South contribute to building just and sustainable cities in the UK.

The TIES team has interviewed key representatives and organisations who engage in the green agenda and climate work in Greater Manchester and nationally. These interviews will help build a picture of the local context as well as identifying challenges to and opportunities for greater inclusivity.

In the next few months the team will be conducting a survey about the environmental behaviours, practices, and attitudes of residents in Greater Manchester (GM). They will be asking 400 non-UK born participants who have arrived from Pakistan or Somalia to the UK in the last 10 years and 100 UK-born participants to take part in the survey. Researchers will be available to help interpret and translate the survey for participants for whom English is not their first language.

The roll out of the survey will begin in Central Manchester. Areas including Moss Side, Rusholme, Hulme and Longsight. The TIES team welcome invitations from organisations and individuals to host 'Survey Groups' in these areas. They particularly encourage organisations who would like to support/run a sustainable group activity (e.g., a clothing swap, litter pick or host a guest speaker) alongside or during the survey group to get in touch. The TIES team will help facilitate these groups and activities. For further information, email Dr. Nafhesa Ali at nafhesa.ali@manchester.ac.uk .

The Committee also heard from the three Climate Change Officers who provided a verbal update on the work that had been delivered in their respective areas.

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

- Recognising the contribution that the Climate Change Officers had made and called for the continued funding of these posts;
- Noting the useful Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS) Place-Based Carbon Calculator tool;
- An update was sought as to Carbon Literacy training and if there was any intention to roll this out further; and
- How were the outcomes of the work described calculated in carbon savings.

The Head of Neighbourhood Management stated that the work of the Neighbourhood Teams, supported by the Climate Change Officers, all contributed to the Manchester Climate Change Action Plan. She stated that work was underway with the Tyndall Centre to formulate a methodology for reporting the carbon savings achieved as a result of these actions. She also commented that engagement work with local businesses in district centres would be undertaken.

The Strategic Lead (South) commented that the CREDS tool was a useful tool that had helped inform the local Neighbourhood Climate Change Plans as this mapped the local area to identify the 'hotspots' in each ward. The Resident and Communities Programme Lead, Manchester Climate Change Agency advised that the Tyndall

Centre were building upon the CREDS tool to develop a bespoke tool for Manchester and that Members would be updated on this at the appropriate time.

The Executive Member for the Environment stated that consideration was being given as to the next steps for carbon literacy training, including working with schools on the eco schools programme and various faith groups across the city.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods paid tribute to the work of the Climate Change Officers and the progress they had made in a relatively short period of time and in the context of the pandemic. He further called upon the government to adequately fund climate change activity.

Decision

The Committee recommend;

1. That a briefing note is provided to Members regarding the future funding of the Climate Change Officers posts when this is available.
2. Recognising the positive climate change initiatives delivered in wards, that good practice and learning should be shared across all Neighbourhood Teams to help strengthen and embed climate change across the city.
3. Active Streets should be promoted and supported across all wards.

ECCSC/21/30 Manchester City Council Estates Decarbonisation

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Estates and Facilities that described the activities and progress to date on the decarbonisation of Manchester City Council's operational estate.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- The Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 included a target to reduce annual emissions from the operational estate by 4,800 tCO₂;
- Describing carbon reduction activity, noting that the Carbon Reduction Programme had been established to oversee the delivery of a wide range of energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation measures throughout the estate;
- An update on the Civic Quarter Heat Network;
- Describing other major construction projects that were underway that included significant opportunities to reduce carbon emissions, over and above the retrofit work carried out by the Carbon Reduction Programme; and
- Future projects in development.

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

- Recognising the work and progress reported to date;

- What was being done to address other smaller buildings and settings, such as those delivering child care and education; and
- Were carbon emissions as a direct result of construction included in the information provided relating to the number of major construction projects underway as part of the Estate Strategy.

The Head of Estates and Facilities stated that priority had been given to the largest carbon emitting buildings within the estate, however work was underway to understand the need of the wider estate in recognition that these will need addressing also. He advised that schools did not form part of the Council's estate, however as part of the capital funding for early years provision all carbon reduction options would be considered when improvements to these sites were considered.

The Head of Estates and Facilities advised that emissions as result of construction and the Estates Strategy were not included however the policy team had been asked to look into this. In addition, he added that the Capital Programme Team had adopted a Low Carbon Build Standard and that low carbon construction methods could be tested via the procurement process. He further commented that where possible the approach of Refurb and Reuse had been adopted to the estate and made reference to the decision to refurbish Alexandra House in Moss Side.

The Executive Member for the Environment commented that the Local Plan would be an opportunity to formalise the new build policy and support the carbon reduction ambitions of the city.

The Deputy Leader (Finance) proposed that further update reports would include a list of those remaining assets, adding that priority had been given the major assets in the first instance and Members needed to appreciate the scale of the challenge and the significant progress to date.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/21/31 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.

Following a discussion regarding receiving a report on construction companies and their impact on carbon emissions in the city, the Chair advised she would discuss this further with the Director of Planning and Building Control with a view to progressing this request.

Decision

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme, noting the comments above.

