

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 13 January 2022

Present: Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

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

Apologies: Councillor Jeavons, Lynch and Sheikh

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment
Jemma Hynes, Chief Executive Officer, FoodSync

ECCSC/22/36 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 as a correct record.

ECCSC/22/37 Manchester Food Board

The Committee considered the report of the Consultant in Public Health, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning that described the strategic aims and objectives of the Manchester Food Board (MFB) in influencing and addressing climate change.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the work of MFB reflected the breadth of issues at play in the wider food system, including food poverty, climate change, retail and hospitality, green spaces and food growing, economic development, waste and recycling, health and wellbeing, and community engagement;
- A summary of key activities over the previous six months; and
- A summary of key activities for the next six months.

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

- Reiterating the Committee's call for immediate action to be taken to address climate change in the context of the climate emergency;
- Recognising the importance of this work and how this impacted across a number of important key themes, including food poverty, social justice and climate change and the need to develop and deliver this programme at scale;
- Noting that the Committee welcomed the report and recommended that a regular update on the activities described be provided to the Committee for consideration;

- Calling upon the government to encourage and call upon large institutions, such as hospitals, to address food sustainability through their procurement process;
- Economy of scale should be used to influence change when procuring food for schools and Care Homes, and engage proactively with the commercial sector;
- Did the MFB have a relationship with the Manchester Climate Change Agency/Partnership;
- How was the MFB commissioned and funded;
- The Action Plan needed to be reviewed to include and prioritise specific actions to address carbon emissions;
- Examples of good local practice in relation to food sustainability, such as the development of the COOP arena in East Manchester, needed to be promoted; and
- The need to adequately fund the work of FoodSync and calling upon the Executive Member for Environment to outline proposals of how this could be achieved in the budget report that was scheduled to be considered at the February meeting.

The Consultant in Public Health, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning, stated that FoodSync had been commissioned up to March 2023 and following this a retender exercise would be undertaken.

The Chief Executive Officer, FoodSync responded by advising that the scale of the challenge was acknowledged and understood, however whilst committed they were limited due to the resources that were available to them. She stated that despite these limitations they aimed to work across all sectors and advised that the Manchester Climate Change Agency were represented on the Board, in addition to commercial representation.

The Chair noted that the Manchester Climate Change Agency were scheduled to present at the February meeting and would present an opportunity for Members to discuss how they supported this activity.

The Chief Executive Officer, FoodSync commented that she would be happy to contribute reports to future meetings, however expressed that Members needed to be mindful so as to not make this task too onerous for the limited number of staff as this would detract from delivering projects and activities. The Chair acknowledged this comment and suggested that she would discuss this further with the Executive Member for Environment to agree a way forward for future reporting and agree reporting metrics. The Chief Executive Officer, FoodSync commented that she would also be willing to arrange a workshop for Members if required.

The Executive Member for Environment advised the Members that a subgroup had been established to review the actions within the Action Plan and noted the comments raised regarding ensuring that carbon reduction was prioritised. The Chief Executive Officer, FoodSync commented that the actions had been co-produced and agreed following a consultation exercise, however acknowledged that since then priorities had changed.

Decision

The Committee recommend;

1. That the Executive Member for Environment outlines the options to increase capacity to support and deliver the work of the Manchester Food Board and FoodSync at scale within the budget report that is scheduled to be considered at the February meeting.
2. That information be shared with Members of the Committee in relation to the commissioning process at the appropriate time and Members kept informed as this progressed.
3. That a progress report is provided at an appropriate time with the content, scope and metrics that are to be included agreed by the Chair in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment.
4. That the Chair consult with the other Scrutiny Chairs to ensure that the topics and themes raised at the meetings, such as health and socio-economic barriers were considered within the remit of their respective Committees.

ECCSC/22/38 Climate Change Action Plan - Quarterly Update Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that described that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and developed a Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-25, which was approved by Executive in March 2020. This report provided an update on the progress in Quarter 3 2021-22 (October – December 2021).

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

- Welcoming the reported progress to date;
- Requesting that questions and issues raised through the scrutiny process were tracked and reported;
- The need to use the procurement process to address the use of plastics as the continued use and production of plastics contributed to the continued use of fossil fuels;
- What were the number of journeys undertaken by air travel in Quarter One, noting that none were undertaken in Quarter Two;
- Was the delivery of Social Value being monitored;
- More work needed to be done to ensure all staff and Members undertook the Carbon Literacy Training;
- Noting that a previous request had been made for a report that described how the Staff Travel Policy supported and contributed to the ambitions of the Action Plan and information also to include the policy applied to Members;
- Had there been any response from the Greater Manchester Pension Fund in response to the continued call to divest from fossil fuels;
- Further information on the Green Skills Action Plan and the outcomes from the Climate Assembly were requested to be circulated for information;
- A quarterly update report on recycling was requested;
- Noting the issue of safety and street lighting, would an increase in luminosity result in a corresponding increase in carbon emissions; and

- Noting that a report that summarised the topics relating to climate change that had been considered by each of the other scrutiny committees would be submitted for consideration at an appropriate time, noting the Chair's comment that this would be in the next municipal year.

In response to the comments and questions raised Officers responded by advising that the comments regarding plastics and the procurement process would be relayed to the relevant team; the issue of tracking and reporting progress against scrutiny comments would be reviewed to consider how this could be best reported in future updates to the Committee; and in response to a specific question asked regarding the emissions from the works to address the Council buildings emissions and how this was captured and recorded within the overall carbon budget, this would be investigated and reported back, noting that a report entitled 'Manchester City Council Estates Decarbonisation' was considered by the Committee at the November 2021 meeting.

In response to the question raised regarding air travel in Quarter One (April to June 2021) it was advised that the number was six domestic flights, and these were as a result of fulfilling statutory social service obligations. The Committee were further informed that a training session had been arranged for all Members who had not undertaken their Carbon Literacy to be delivered following the meeting of Council, 2 February 2022. With regard to staff training, this was not currently mandatory however discussions were ongoing with HR colleagues to progress this issue. An assurance was also provided that the monitoring of the delivery of Social Value would be undertaken.

In response to the question regarding emissions and street lighting, officers reported that if the brightness of the lights were increased this would increase the carbon emissions generated. The issue raised regarding safety was noted and officers advised that if there were specific issues of concern regarding a specific location individual cases could be investigated to review the current local arrangement and look at what steps could be taken to mitigate the concern.

The Executive Member for Environment acknowledged the comment and request for a report on how the Staff Travel Policy supported and contributed to the ambitions of the Action Plan and added that a separate briefing note to Members would be provided regarding the travel policy for Members. She further confirmed that the information requested on the Green Skills Action Plan and the outcomes from the Climate Assembly would be circulated to the Committee for information. With regard to the response from the Greater Manchester Pension Fund and the continued call to divest from fossil fuels, she stated that a statement had been published on their webpage and the link to this would be circulated following the meeting to enable Members to locate this information and consider the response.

The Executive Member for Environment noted the request from the Committee for a regular quarterly report on recycling and said she would discuss this with Strategic Lead, Waste Recycling and Street Cleaning to agree how this could be best presented to the Committee.

Decision

The Committee recommend;

1. That a report that summarises the topics relating to climate change that have been considered by each of the other scrutiny Committees is submitted for consideration at an appropriate time.
2. That a quarterly report on recycling rates is submitted to the Committee for consideration.

ECCSC/22/39 Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation Outline Business Case

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that sought the opinion to support the proposal to secure delegation from Executive for the Council to enter commercial negotiations to progress the purchase of a suitable solution with options being a solar asset and / or a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

The Committee had been invited to comment on the report prior to it being considered by the Executive.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Noting that the Committee had considered a report on this subject at their meeting of 14 October 2021;
- Describing the Key findings of the Feasibility Study;
- Updated Market Availability Assessment & Pricing, noting the Council was in the process of entering into Non-Disclosure Agreements with developers for two sites in order to progress discussions;
- Council's future energy needs considering a range of factors affecting future energy demand and the Council's CO2 reduction needs;
- Financing and the implications for both revenue and capital budgets;
- Current Energy Purchasing Policy; and
- Accounting for Emissions.

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

- Supporting the proposals and rationale described within the report and feasibility report;
- In addition to the proposals presented all opportunities should be explored to maximise smaller scale production of solar energy, such as local reservoirs;
- All avenues should be explored to influence to government to introduce grants for residents so that they can install solar panels onto their homes;
- What would happen to the site following the anticipated life span of 35-40 years;
- Clarification was sought in relation to schools and Bolton, noting that The Council's Energy Management Unit also purchased energy for Bolton Council;
- Employment and skills opportunities for Manchester residents should be maximised through this project; and

- All learning from this project should be understood and applied to future schemes.

In response to the comments raised, Officers replied that they acknowledged and appreciated the views expressed. Clarification was provided that due to the complex commercial arrangements, both schools and Bolton Council were not included in the proposals, however energy purchased would continue to be supplied via a green tariff. Officers reported that a commercial and viability decision would be taken as to the future of the site in 35-40 years based on the circumstances at that time.

Decision

The Committee endorse the recommendations that the Executive:

1. Note the options in Section 4 available to the Council.
2. Note that should the direct purchase of a solar asset be pursued this will be funded via borrowing and require Council approval.
3. Agree to grant delegation for the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, in consultation with the Leader, Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Environment to negotiate for the purchase of a solar asset / PPA and any associated corporate documentation to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle if required, to meet the Council's 2020-25 CO₂ emissions reduction target and contribute positively to our longer term zero carbon 2038 target through:
 - development / purchase of a suitable large-scale solar PV facility
 - a suitable direct PPA of renewable energy

ECCSC/22/40 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.

Members requested that the Executive Member for Environment prepare a briefing note to be circulated to all Members that provided an update on recent developments in relation to the implementation of the Clean Air Zone for Greater Manchester.

A Member commented upon the remit of the Committee and requested that this be reviewed. The Chair stated she would raise this to be discussed at the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Decisions

1. The Committee note the report and agree the work programme.
2. Recommend that the Executive Member for Environment prepare a briefing note to be circulated to all Members that provided an update on recent developments in

relation to the implementation of the Clean Air Zone for Greater Manchester.