

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 February 2023

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Holt, Hughes, Ilyas, Lyons, Nunney, Razaq and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Doswell

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Stanton, Deputy Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Johns, Chair of the Economy Scrutiny Committee

ECCSC/23/8 Minute's Silence For All Victims Of The Earthquake in Turkey and Syria

The Committee and all those present observed a minute's silence to remember all those victims of the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

ECCSC/23/9 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 as a correct record.

ECCSC/23/10 Revenue Budget Update

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that set out the latest forecast revenue budget position, and the next steps.

Following the provisional finance settlement announced 19 December the Council was forecasting a balanced budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The risk had moved to the next Spending review period 2025/26 where a shortfall of £57m was forecast. This reduced to £40m after the proposed use of £17m smoothing reserves.

The report further described that in November 2022 scrutiny committees were presented with cuts and saving options totaling £42.3m over three years for

consideration. The provisional settlement on 19 December reflected a change in government policy and provided more funding than initially expected. This had given the opportunity to review the quantum and phasing of savings. It was now proposed that options of £36.2m were progressed. The settlement also gives some scope for targeted investments which would put the council in a more sustainable position to face the next spending review in 2025.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources paid tribute to the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and her team for all of their hard work in bringing forward the suite of budget reports following the settlement announcements. He stated that the budget settlement needed to be considered in the context of over a decade of austerity that had been imposed on Manchester. He stated that the result of this was that the Council's budget had reduced by £428m over this period, and that if the city had received the average cut in funding, Manchester would be £77m per year better off.

He commented that the decision to cut local authority funding was a result of ideological decisions taken by the Government, noting that the Government had failed to recognise or apologise for the instability they had caused to the national economy. He further referenced the impact of inflation, population growth in the city and the cost-of-living crisis that all impacted on budgetary pressures. He commented that the Government had failed to communicate their financial decisions for the city, noting the recent experience of announcements of the Levelling Up bids.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the funding decisions of the Government had effectively forced the Council to increase Council Tax. He advised that the Council was able to deliver a balanced budget and Council Tax would be used to support the most vulnerable residents in the city; support the social care sector and invest in the future of the city.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that despite the challenges the budget proposed a further £1m investment into waste and street cleaning. This would support Basic Services and Street Cleaning and was in addition to the £1m investment into waste and street cleaning put forward as part of the 2022/23 budget. It was further proposed that there be a further investment of £1.2m to support specific activity in and around the City Centre, District Centres and key arterial routes.

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

- Noting the importance of considering the suite of budget reports in the context of 13 years of cuts and austerity;
- Stating that the Government's funding was unfair; and
- Recognising the hard work of Executive Members and officers in bringing forward the suite of reports.

Decision

To note the report and endorse the recommendation that the Executive approve these budget proposals.

ECCSC/23/11 Neighbourhood Directorate 2023/24 Budget

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided a further update on the priorities for the services in the remit of this committee and detailed the changes to the initial revenue budget options proposed by officers in November 2022.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an overview of services and priorities;
- Information relating to the service budget and proposed changes, noting that the overall Neighbourhood budget is £130m, the services under the remit of this scrutiny had gross budgets of £66.057m and net budgets of £60.603m with 176 FTE;
- There was no projected workforce impact of activity to deliver the savings;
- Investment and Growth Proposals;
- Future opportunities and risks; and
- Noting that consideration had been given to how the proposed savings could impact on different protected or disadvantaged groups.

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

- How would the additional investment described in the Investment and Growth proposals be used and allocated across the city; and
- Welcoming the proposal to defer the introduction of charging for replacement recycling bins until 2025/26.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) stated that he welcomed the investment described by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and as outlined in the Investment and Growth proposals, however it was important to recognise that there were immense pressures on the service as a result of years of budget cuts. He commented that the detail as to how this investment was to be allocated and used was yet to be finalised. He advised that by working with Biffa it was anticipated that this funding would be used to tackle hotspots and problematic areas. He stated that if Members had suggestions for areas for attention, he would welcome this feedback.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) addressed the discussion on the introduction of charging for replacement recycling bins. He commented that this had originally been suggested as a savings option prior to the final settlement announcement. He described that further modelling on this proposal would be undertaken. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that the decision to defer this decision was the correct one, especially in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods commented that the continued cuts to funding had severely impacted on the Council's ability to deliver services and Departments had been forced to find efficiencies year on year. She stated that all opportunities for investment to support local communities would continue to be pursued. She stated that Neighbourhood Teams would continue to work in

partnership with business, voluntary organisations, such as Keep Britain Tidy to engage with residents, local communities and elected Members on the issue of waste and recycling.

Decision

To note the report and endorse the recommendation that the Executive approve these budget proposals.

ECCSC/23/12 Zero Carbon 2023/24 Budget Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an overview of the funding secured and invested to date to enable delivery of Manchester City Council's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-2025.

The report also set out what had been delivered as a result of the additional revenue funding provided from the Council's budget for 2022/23 and highlighted the priority actions to be delivered between 2023-25.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information on the funding to deliver Manchester City Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25;
- Noting that to date, the Council had already put in place investment of approximately £227m to deliver the 5-year Climate Change Action Plan along with an additional direct revenue investment of £800k secured as part of the 2022/23 budget setting;
- Noting that the additional revenue investment of £800k which was secured as part of the 2022/23 budget setting was providing important additional capacity, particularly in delivering the city-wide actions;
- Describing progress during 2022/23 against a number of work streams; and
- Priorities for 2023/24.

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

- Recognising the significant and ambitious work undertaken as described to address climate change;
- Thanking the Executive Member for Environment and Transport and her Deputy and all officers concerned for their commitment to this work; and
- What was the plan to convert the remaining 50% of our waste collection fleet to be replaced by electric vehicles.

The Zero Carbon Manager stated that the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan that had been considered by the Committee included a specific workstream action to develop a business case for exploring how to convert the remaining 50% of our waste collection fleet to be replaced by electric vehicles, adding that this was to be completed by July 2024.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that climate change was at the forefront of all decision making across Directorates. She reiterated the position that it was everyone's responsibly to take actions to address climate change. She commented that the report clearly articulated the positive outcomes the continued investment in this area of activity had on reducing carbon emissions. She stated that Manchester remained committed to addressing the issue of climate change despite the failure of the Government to take this issue seriously, especially on the important issue of housing retrofitting.

In response to a question raised regarding the ambitions and targets of the Manchester Food Board and their Sustainable Food Policy it was suggested that a more detailed report on this specific subject area be considered at a future meeting of the committee.

The Chair in concluding this item of business stated that she welcomed the continued commitment to invest in actions to address climate change and fully endorsed the report.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/23/13 Draft Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Development) that presented the final draft Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan.

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:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the development of the Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan;
- Information on the consultation process and describing the key themes arising from the public consultation; and
- Providing an update on Staff Travel policy.

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

- Welcoming the strategy, noting that it clearly articulated the commitment, ambition, vision and principles;
- Sustainable transport was a constant issue raised by residents when speaking with elected Members;
- Consideration needed to be given to the format and imagery used on documents to ensure it was appropriate and reflected Manchester;

- Noting that road crossings were an important feature that could be introduced to support walking;
- The need for connectivity across wards;
- The importance of a reliable bus service;
- The need to tackle off road bikes but retain access to green open spaces;
- More information was sought on Vision Zero; and
- Requesting a further detailed report on Staff Active Travel be submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport thanked all of the team for their work in bringing forward this strategy. She further paid tribute to her former deputy, Councillor Taylor who had led on this issue previously. She stated that it was important to recognise that this was a work in progress and the strategy would be reviewed and updated going forward, noting the comments expressed regarding appropriate imagery and the section that discussed targets for primary school children and secondary school children and associated travel to school. She recognised the comments from the Members' discussion that the notion of active travel cut across many different issues, including health, education and accessibility. She stated that the report articulated the scale of ambition the Council had for the city and the residents of Manchester. She commented that this strategy had been drafted in consultation with a range of partners and complemented and supported other Council strategies, such as Healthier Lives, Clean Air and Zero Carbon.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport commented that this was a person-centred strategy, adding that an important aspect would be behaviour change in relation to transport adding that this could only be achieved if the systems were in place to encourage and support this. She further commented that a report on Vision Zero would be included on the Committee's work programme at an appropriate time to coordinate with when this would be considered by the TfGM Transport Committee.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport paid tribute to officers for organising and delivering meaningful and well attended public consultation events, adding that this had been recognised and valued by residents. She further welcomed the recognition of the views captured at the Young People's Green Summit.

The Strategic Director (Development) commented that the Economy Scrutiny Committee would be considering the Growth and Development Budget paper that further discussed resources to deliver on this ambition.

The Interim Head of Infrastructure and Environment advised that Active Travel was a key element of the Sustainable Travel Strategy, and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) were working closely on the issue of public transport, including bus services.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Johns, Chair of the Economy Scrutiny Committee. He stated that the Economy Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised the development of this plan at their meetings of July 2022 and more recently in January 2023. He recognised and welcomed that key issues and considerations raised by the Committee had been included into the draft strategy, however there were issues that

had been raised that he felt had not been adequately addressed, in particular in relation to the integration of public transport; building works and developments and gully cleaning and maintenance, with specific reference to those on cycle paths.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that the draft strategy would be reviewed to strengthen these references in the report and thanked Councillor Johns for his contribution.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Executive approve and endorse the Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan.

ECCSC/23/14 Zero Carbon Focused Communications and Engagement Update

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Strategic Communications, and Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency that provided an overview of the investment into zero carbon focused communications, and early assessment of impact.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information in relation to the research that had been conducted commissioned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Information in regard to communications activity;
- Information on the Behavioural Change Campaign;
- Communications linked to the refreshed Climate Change Framework;
- Information on the integrated citywide communications campaign;
- Information on the approach to citywide engagement activity;
- Manchester Climate Change Agency activity; and
- Reporting mechanisms.

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

- Noting the positive work undertaken by residents in Whalley Range in relation to zero carbon and recommending that the video that showcased this resident engagement be shown at a meeting of full Council;
- Noting that the research referred to within the report was pre pandemic and asking if there was an intention to undertake this exercise again; and
- How was impact and reach measured and did we work with other core cities and share good practice on this area of activity.

The Head of Strategic Communications stated a consistent approach was taken across all departments and policies to ensure that the key messaging on the issue of zero carbon was aligned. He advised that using intelligence and research enabled the assessment of how these key messages landed, noting that the impact and

outcomes would not always be immediately apparent. He further discussed the limitations of using Twitter as a measure, adding that a more valuable route was to engage in networks and in conversations with residents and communities on the issue of zero carbon. He commented that Neighbourhood Teams were key to working with residents, understanding what mattered to them and supporting initiatives on the issue of zero carbon. He further stated that good practice on this, and a range of related activities was shared with councils across Greater Manchester and with the Core Cities network.

In response to the 2019 research referred to in the report, he advised that this had provided a very useful baseline, however recognising the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis the intention was to commission this research again.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that she received regular reports on this area of activity and the approach was regularly reviewed to ensure it maximised impact. She further stated that she would welcome feedback on the Members Newsletter that had been produced and periodically circulated.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport noted the comments from the Committee regarding the request to have the video shown at Council and she advised that she would discuss this with the Leader.

Decision

To note the report and recommend that the Executive Member for Environment and Transport discuss with the Leader the request to have the video referred to by Councillor Holt shown at a meeting of Council.

ECCSC/23/15 Household Waste and Recycling Campaigns and Engagement

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on the approach to communications and engagement with Manchester residents to reduce their own carbon impact by reducing the waste they produced, reusing what they could and disposing of or recycling items using legitimate routes.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Providing an update on the Resource & Waste Strategy (2018);
- Information on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), noting that EPR was intended to transfer the full cost of dealing with packaging waste from Local Authorities to producers;
- Data in relation to recycling performance;
- Information on relation to communications and campaigns;
- Information on the approach to engagement; noting that it was important to note that communication and campaigns were not the same as engagement; and
- Describing the priorities for 2023/24.

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

- Welcoming the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), stating that this should reduce the incidents of litter and increase recycling rates;
- Expressing disappointment that glass bottles would not be collected by DRS in England;
- Expressing concern that incidents of flytipping were increasing and consideration needed to be given to relaxing the restrictions at Household Waste and Recycling Centres to enable small business to dispose of their waste;
- Consideration needed to be given to introducing additional collections, particularly for cardboard during the Christmas period;
- Consideration needed to be given to the format of the annual recycling calendars, especially the font size used; and
- The number of free Bulky Waste collection offer needed to be increased per household.

The Project Manager, Service Improvement stated that the Deposit Return Scheme was welcomed and commented that this could potentially realise savings to the Authority. He stated that the frustrations regarding glass not being included were shared. He commented that the issue of flytipping was understood and campaigns and work, both at a local level and GM level were underway to address this. In regard to Christmas collections, he commented that planning had already commenced for this activity across all waste streams.

The Head of Strategic Communications referred to the comments raised regarding the calendars by stating that this document contained a lot of information and that the font size would be reviewed following the feedback from Members. He stated that residents could also receive information and notification reminders via email.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that a detailed report on the enforcement activity to address flytipping was reported to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee. She requested that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate the latest report for information to members of this Committee.

The Project Manager, Service Improvement stated Household Waste and Recycling Centres were not intended for waste resulting from commercial activity. He acknowledged the issue expressed regarding the permit scheme and added that this was to be reviewed. With regard to the Bulky Waste collection service, he added that the vast majority of these requests for service were undertaken free of charge, and the service was committed to working with residents if they were approached with a request for any additional collections. The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods added that this service needed to be considered in the context of the wider budget and pressures on this service.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/23/16 Planning Policy and Climate Change

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that considered how planning policy contributed to addressing climate change.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing a general overview of current planning policy;
- An update on emerging planning policy, Places for Everyone and the Manchester Local Plan;
- A summary of proposals announced at the national level on 22 December 2022;
- Key information on carbon standards for new build homes; flooding mitigation and heat island mitigation;
- A summary of the current consultation on updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and
- Potential future changes to NPPF via the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

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

- Recognising the challenges and barriers some residents had experienced when attempting to install energy efficiency measures to their homes due to the physical limitations of the building, consideration needed to be given to future proofing properties through the planning policy;
- Discussion of the approach to enforcement of planning conditions, adding that residents needed confidence that agreements entered into as part of planning agreement were upheld and adhered to;
- Noting the carbon emissions associated with the construction phase of developments;
- Recognising that the National Planning Policy Framework was a critical development in addressing climate change; and
- Recognising the importance of wildlife corridors to support and enhance biodiversity and that the National Planning Policy Framework should be used to maximise the delivery of these.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that climate change was at the forefront of all considerations and commented that a report entitled 'Local Plan Update' was to be considered at the Economy Scrutiny Committee that afternoon. In response to the comment raised regarding future proofing properties she commented that a distinction needed to be made between new build and retrofitting. She commented that a holistic approach was taken to energy efficiency and climate change by considering this in a wider context of place making and the wider physical environment, including supporting biodiversity. She advised that submissions would be made to the Future Homes Standard consultation, noting the Government had made a commitment to introducing a Future Homes Standard by 2025, for new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that they worked within existing legislation to enhance and maximise environmental benefits when

negotiating with developers, making reference to bike storage and higher insulation standards in new developments. She added that good practice and experiences from other Authorities were also considered.

In regard to enforcement of planning conditions, the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that this was achieved via the conditions attached to a planning consent and associated legal agreements. She stated that in the vast majority of cases these were adhered to and that she would discuss the specific issue a Member had raised outside of the meeting.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager acknowledged the comments raised regarding the levels of carbon associated with the construction phase of developments. He stated that a lot of research was underway to consider the materials used and viable alternatives and the findings of this would inform the Local Plan. The Committee requested that a report on this specific aspect of work relating to construction materials and carbon emissions be submitted for consideration at an appropriate time. The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing added that all developments were required to have an agreed Construction Management Plan to minimise the worst impacts as a result of development and made reference to the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/23/17 Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation - Solar Farm - Part A

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided information on the progress of negotiation and Due Diligence for the purchase of a Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generation Project to ensure the Council can achieve the CO₂ savings as set out in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-2025.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background; and
- Describing progress to date and next steps.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/23/18 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.

In discussing the Work Programme, Members requested that reports on the following topics be scheduled for consideration in the new municipal year: Consumption based emissions (including food); Staff Travel policy; Vision Zero; Planning and Construction (with specific consideration of the emissions associated with the construction phase and materials); Biodiversity (including information on the findings of the open space audit); and the analysis of the impact of the additional investment of the £1m into waste and street cleaning that had been discussed as part of consideration of the budget report.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the March work programme.

ECCSC/23/19 Exclusion of Press and Public

A recommendation was made that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items of business.

Decision

To exclude the press and public during consideration of the following items which involved consideration of exempt information as provided for in the Local Government Access to Information Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

ECCSC/23/20 Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation - Solar Farm - Part B

Decision

To note the report.