

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 March 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Holt, Hughes, Nunney and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Lyons and Razaq

Also present:

Cllr Rahman, Statutory Deputy Leader
Councillor Rawlins, 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 Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

ECCSC/23/21 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 as a correct record.

To note the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Ward Action Plans Task and Finish Group held 23 February 2023.

ECCSC/23/22 Housing Retrofit

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on the Council's proposals to decarbonise the city's housing, incorporating an update on Green Skills.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Retrofit targets, noting that the Council's Housing Strategy 2022-32 set a target of retrofitting at least a third of the city's 67,300 social rented properties by 2032;
- Analysis of the housing stock in Manchester using the modelling exercise carried out by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2021;
- Retrofit measures;
- Progress and emerging plans for decarbonising Council-owned properties and other social rented properties;
- Information on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund;
- Challenges relating to social housing;
- Considerations relating to private sector housing;

- Considerations relating to private rented properties;
- Cross-tenure approaches and area-based schemes;
- Neighbourhood-based approaches to retrofit;
- Key enablers, noting that the Our Retrofit Plan was founded on four key enablers: resident engagement, skills, funding and partnerships.
- Funding arrangements;
- Monitoring and reporting arrangements; and
- Conclusions.

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

- Recognising the significant amount of work delivered by officers to date on this important area of work;
- The government needed to be lobbied for adequate funding to enable Manchester to deliver on the stated ambitions;
- Recommending that the Chair write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. The purpose being to invite him to meet with the Committee to discuss the proposals for Manchester to decarbonise the city's housing stock, recognising the importance of this to address climate change and support residents during the cost-of-living crisis.
- How realistic was the target of completing the zero-carbon retrofitting of a minimum of 1/3rd of the 67,300 homes managed by Manchester Housing Providers and achieve an EPC rating of B or above across this stock by 2032;
- Welcoming the reported neighbourhood-based approaches to retrofit;
- The need to identify all private landlords in Manchester;
- Noting the difficulties experienced by leaseholders in obtaining permission by owners to undertake retrofitting works;
- The need to ensure all new builds are future proofed to ensure those properties do not require retrofitting in future years;
- Recognising the importance of skills and training to deliver the ambitions described; and
- Information on the outcomes of the referenced skills bootcamps.

The Senior Project Officer, Housing and Residential Growth stated that all funding opportunities were being explored, including working with other Local Authorities across Greater Manchester.

The Zero Carbon Programme Manager acknowledged the challenges experienced by leaseholders and those in the private rented sector. She stated that this was why the neighbourhood-based approach was important as this work and improvements realised could influence these sectors. The Committee were also informed that larger social housing providers were encouraged to work with and support smaller providers. The Director of Development and Strategic Housing stated that landlord licensing would be used to gather information and data and engage with private landlords and impose housing standards on licensed properties.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that the issue of skills was important and also very challenging. He stated that the pipeline of traditional construction works in Manchester made it difficult for staff to be released to

attend training, and this was in addition to funding challenges. He stated that these challenges were understood, and work was underway to address these. He referred to the detailed section within the report that discussed specifically the subject of skills.

The Work and Skills Lead advised that analysis of the outcomes of the skills bootcamps would be undertaken, advising that that these were available to people who were already in employment and were seeking to upskill or retrain.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development stated that he welcomed the report and paid tribute to all of the officers involved for their hard work in bringing this important work forward. He reiterated the comments expressed by Members for the need for adequate funding from the government. He stated that this work needed to be delivered at scale and at speed to address emissions and climate change and to support residents at this time of a cost-of-living crisis.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Chair write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. The purpose being to invite him to meet with the Committee to discuss the proposals for Manchester to decarbonise the city's housing stock, recognising the importance of this to address climate change and support residents during the cost-of-living crisis.

ECCSC/23/23 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that provided the annual update on the delivery of the Green and Blue Implementation (GBI) Plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that the Strategy contributed to delivering Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan by helping to create a more climate resilient city;
- Describing progress made during 2022/23 and setting out the key priorities for 2023/24;
- Information on the Environment Agency with regards to their role concerning pollution and flood risk;
- Information on the Our Rivers Our City Strategy,
- Providing an update on the Tree Action Plan;
- Noting that an update on Victoria North would be brought to Scrutiny later this year; and
- Future priorities.

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

- How would the required 10% improvement in biodiversity be measured;

- Information on the impact of Ash dieback, a serious disease of ash trees was requested;
- Noting the potential for conflict between conservation and access to green spaces;
- Information on the Green Space Audit was requested;
- Noting the importance of green corridors to support wildlife; and
- Planning applications should be scrutinised to ensure tree planting and their locations were appropriate.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer described that the measurement of the 10% improvement in biodiversity was to be undertaken using a prescribed agreed national methodology. Members were advised that a management plan would report progress on this activity. The Chair asked that information in relation to this be included in future update reports.

In relation to skills the Policy Officer stated that working within existing partnerships and networks all opportunities were explored to translate these into practical opportunities for skills and training, referring to the In Our Nature project and the opportunities realised.

In response to the impact of Ash dieback, the Neighbourhood Team Lead stated that intelligence gathering in relation to this was currently underway. The Chair asked that information in relation to this activity and resulting actions be included in future update reports.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that the importance of green space was understood, especially in the context of the Marmot Review and the pandemic. She said that analysis of the Green Space Audit was currently being undertaken. She further referred to the discussion of tree planting and planning applications. She stated that lessons were learnt in regard to this activity, adding that other Council departments, such as Highways, were conscious and responsive to the issue of trees and were part of the GBI Group.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager noted the discussion regarding connectivity and the importance of green corridors. He stated that neighbouring authorities worked together collaboratively to promote and support this area of activity.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/23/24 Parks and Open Spaces - Parks Climate Change Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of Manchester's Parks Climate Change Action Plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Setting out the background to the development of the plan;
- Describing how the plan aligned to the wider ambition of the Council;

- Providing an overview of the action plan; and
- Conclusion and next steps.

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

- Clarification was sought regarding the use of glyphosate in parks and seeking an assurance that no general glyphosate-based treatments had been used to manage weeds in parks since 2019 and was only used to treat Japanese Knotweed and occasionally Giant Hogweed;
- An update was sought in relation to energy generation in parks;
- The described action plan needed to have Key Performance Indicators included that could be monitored, reported and evaluated;
- The target should be for all staff working in the service to have undergone their carbon literacy training;
- All new contract arrangements relating to activities in parks should include clear guidance regarding single use plastics; and
- What was the approach to grass cutting in parks, noting the differences in expectations of residents in relation to this activity.

The Parks Lead stated that the statement within the report regarding the use of glyphosate-based treatments was correct. In response to the broader discussion that arose regarding the approach to the use of glyphosate-based treatments in settings other than parks, the Chair advised that a specific report on this subject, including all herbicides, would be scheduled for consideration in the new municipal year.

The Parks Lead stated that the standards set in parks would support engagement and influence behaviour change with partners and key stakeholders, such as allotments. She advised that all opportunities for engagement on the issue of climate change were explored and made reference to the work undertaken in partnership with the National Allotment Society.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that Climate Change Action Plans were important for parks and related friends' groups. He stated that the implementation of these were important to lead by example and support wider behaviour change. The Chair commented that carbon literacy training should be extended to friends' groups and volunteers.

The Parks Lead advised that options for generating energy in parks had been explored, however they were not currently viable. She advised that alternative energy solutions were considered in any new developments in parks and all opportunities would be considered. She reiterated that climate change was considered in all decision making and the service worked closely with the Zero Carbon Team. She further acknowledged the comments regarding the need for metrics and Key Performance Indicators across all workstreams, adding that consideration would be given to this. In terms of governance arrangements, she described that this work was reported to the Parks Strategy Board and the Zero Carbon Coordination Board.

The Parks Lead advised that the ambition would be to have all staff carbon literacy trained and this would be progressed over time, adding that all new staff would automatically receive this as part of their induction to the service. She added that the

bespoke carbon literacy training had been well received by all staff who undertaken this.

The Parks Lead advised that contracts were reviewed to ensure they included arrangements to remove single use plastics, adding that innovative approaches were considered to other activities, such as alternative barrier tape to be used when events were held in parks.

The Parks Lead stated that a mapping exercise would be undertaken across all parks so that those areas that would be mowed could be clearly identified to manage residents' expectations.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that the Council's Parks Strategy would be refreshed to incorporate the work described. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer added that this would also be incorporated into the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Decision

To recommend that a report on the approach to the use herbicides across all areas of the council's activities, including the use of glyphosate-based treatments in Manchester be submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

ECCSC/23/25 Bereavement Services - Approach to Environmental Sustainability

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on progress on the management of the delivery of cemetery and crematorium services, describing how the activities contributed to carbon reduction, biodiversity, and sustainability.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the strategy and approach, noting that each cemetery had a Friends Group who played a role in the management and maintenance of the cemeteries, bringing with them priorities led by local communities;
- Providing an update on the Cremator Replacement Project;
- Describing carbon reduction initiatives within the cemeteries;
- Describing biodiversity and sustainability initiatives within the cemeteries;
- An overview of the approach to community Involvement
- The approach to waste and recycling, noting that in 2023/24 there would be a full review of waste and recycling, including plastic waste used on floral tributes and flowers; and
- Next steps.

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

- Noting the significant amount of work already delivered, consideration should be given to developing a specific Climate Change Action Plan for the service,

similar to that described in the Parks and Open Spaces report considered earlier on the agenda;

- What was being done to engage with private crematoriums in cemeteries;
- The need to consider how mourners accessed sites, noting the impact that a large amount of vehicles parking had in residential areas; and
- Noting that all discussions on this area of work needed to be handled sensitively.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods paid tribute to Barrie Jones, Business Units Lead, Bereavement Services, Retail & Wholesale Markets, Pest Control who would be retiring soon.

The Strategic Lead, who was attending on behalf of the Business Units Lead stated that work was already underway to develop a service specific climate change action plan. She advised that progress of this activity would be reported to the Committee.

The Bereavement Services Manager stated that she would engage with private operators of crematoriums on the issue of environmental sustainability and she welcomed the support offered by local Members in these discussions. She further commented that she would also discuss this subject with local Funeral Directors. She invited all Members to visit the service and see the work that was being delivered. The Chair noted that the Committee would request an update report on this area of work in the new year and a visit would be arranged to coincide with consideration of the report.

Decision

To note the report and request that an update report be submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

ECCSC/23/26 Zero Carbon Culture

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Lead, Resources and Programmes that provided an overview of the progress that the Council's Culture Team had made in responding to the climate emergency, and how the team was working in partnership with the cultural sector to support Manchester's progress towards its 2038 zero carbon target.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the subject area;
- Noting that the catalyst for change in the culture sector had been the ever-growing threat of the climate emergency, and the understanding that without action and a unified response, there would be irreversible damage done to the planet and our communities;
- Providing case studies;
- Noting that Manchester's Cultural Impact Survey for 2020/21 showed that a total of 427 employees across 28 cultural organisations had received training in Carbon Literacy from an accredited trainer, representing a 35% increase in

the number of organisations with trained employees when compared with 2019/20;

- Recognising the importance of volunteers and reporting that many organisations were now taking forward carbon literacy training for their volunteers;
- Describing that the cultural sector had come together to engage in collective action on climate change;
- Information on the Manchester Culture Awards, noting that since its conception in 2018, the awards had spotlighted sustainability with a “Promotion of Environmental Sustainability” award; and
- Describing the role and achievements of the Council’s Culture Team and zero carbon, including next steps.

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

- Welcoming the report and recognising the significant contribution the cultural sector in Manchester had, both in terms of a practical role and in a leadership capacity to address climate change;
- The importance of ‘story telling’ as a means of articulating progress and influencing wider behaviour change;
- Noting the positive example set by HOME;
- How these examples of good practice should be used to influence other sectors across the city;
- Welcoming carbon literacy training being made available to volunteers; and
- Noting the challenge presented by buildings in relation to carbon emissions.

The Director of Culture welcomed the many positive comments articulated by Members. He advised that the concept of ‘story telling’ was an important vehicle to engage with and influence behaviour change. He further commented that HOME did work with partners to promote this work and referred to the work with Transport for Greater Manchester on the issue of active travel to and from the site. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer acknowledged and paid tribute to the positive work HOME delivered with partners and local businesses in Manchester on the issue of climate change.

The Strategic Lead, Resources & Programmes stated that the report that had been considered by the Committee would be shared more widely with partners to showcase the good work described. He paid tribute to Julies Bicycle, a pioneering not-for-profit organisation, mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate and ecological crisis.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport paid tribute to GMAST, a group that brought together the cultural and creative community across Greater Manchester to address the climate and ecological crisis.

The Statutory Deputy Leader stated that the cultural sector was leading on this agenda, even when a lot of the work was ‘invisible’. He further noted the opportunity for culture to serve as a catalyst to influence behaviour change in relation to climate change. He welcomed the support and many positive comments from the Committee.

Decision

To note the report and requested that an update report be submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

ECCSC/23/27 Embedding a Zero-Carbon Workforce Culture

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided information on the progress being made towards embedding a zero-carbon culture within the Council as part of the Carbon Literacy journey.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Reporting progress against key actions identified; and
- Summary and next steps.

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

- Welcoming the inclusion of data presented at a Directorate level;
- Noting the low levels of staff in some Directorates who had attended training to date;
- Recognising the challenge for certain staff to attend training, what was being done to support staff with busy and competing workloads; and
- Requesting an update on the number of elected Members who had completed the carbon literacy training.

The Strategic Head of Organisational Development & Transformation recognised that there were differences across Directorates in the levels of staff having undertaken their carbon literacy training. She described to address this, initiatives had been deployed to encourage and maximise attendance, these included delivering bespoke/service-specific training and staff being able to book training further in advance. She further commented that all new starters had carbon literacy training as part of the induction programme, and all staff transitioning into new roles would have their training records reviewed. She stated that there had also been a focus on the Senior Leadership Group, noting that as they realised the benefits of this training this would encourage staff in their respective teams to undertake the training if they had not already done so. She stated that a staff Zero Carbon Network had been established for staff and teams to discuss carbon reduction initiatives instigated following the training and to share good practice and offer support.

In terms of the number of Councillors who had completed their training, the Zero Carbon Workforce Development Manager reported that 96% of Councillors had completed the training, and the outstanding 3 Councillors would have completed this by the end of April 2023.

In concluding this item of business, the Chair recognised the significant amount of work undertaken by Councillor Foley in relation to carbon literacy training.

Decision

To note the report and request that an update report be submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

ECCSC/23/28 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 noted that this was the last meeting of the municipal year. She stated that work was in progress to develop the work programme for May onwards and she welcomed suggestions from Members for any specific areas of interest that they would like included. She invited Members to email her and the Scrutiny Support Officer with these suggestions.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme, noting the above comments.