

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 22 June 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Collins, Doswell, Holt, Ilyas, Razaq, Wiest and Wright

Apologies: Councillor McCaul

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport

ECCNSC/23/34 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 May 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/35 Climate Change Action Plan Work Programme 2023-24

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided Members with an update on the work programme for the third year of the Action Plan (CCAP Work Programme 2023-24).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Describing the actions to be progressed in Year 4 of the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-25;
- The achievements and highlights of Year 3 would be detailed in the Annual Report 2022-23 which would be presented to the Committee and the Executive in September 2023 and would then be made available on the Council's website;
- Noting that the actions described were structured across the following five workstreams:
 1. Buildings and Energy.
 2. Transport and Travel.
 3. Reducing Consumption Based Emissions and Influencing Suppliers.
 4. Climate Adaptation, Carbon Storage and Carbon Sequestration.
 5. Influencing Behaviour and Being a Catalyst for Change; and
- Distinguishing between those actions that were Council Actions and those that were City Actions.

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

- What were the identified challenges on delivery of the actions in year 4;

- How was the breadth of good work and progress made communicated to residents of the city, adding that this was important to influence wider behaviour change in relation to climate action;
- Were there enough recycling facilities across the Council buildings estate sufficient to enable all staff to recycle appropriately;
- More information was requested in relation to green skills and housing, with particular reference to Registered Housing Providers across the city;
- Did we use all available levers to influence partners and other sectors across the city to take immediate action to address climate change;
- Noting the reference to the Manchester Food Board and commenting that methane associated with food waste was a significant contributor to climate change;
- Further information was requested in relation to the sustainable materials list that identified carbon and whole life costs for Highways that had been identified as an action in workstream 2; and
- Consideration needed to be given to advertising that was displayed across the city so as not to promote high carbon emission activities or products.

In response to the Members' comments and questions the Zero Carbon Manager described that the key areas and challenges related to buildings and transport. She stated that significant progress had been achieved and reported to the Committee in regard to reducing emissions across the Council owned estate; however, domestic retrofit, across all sectors was a challenge. She described that they worked closely with the Climate Change Partnership and used the experience and outcomes achieved across the Council estate to provide examples of good practice to influence the commercial sector. She described that they were also working with Registered Housing Providers as part of the wider approach to housing retrofit and the Committee noted that they would receive a substantive report on this work at their September meeting, adding that this would also include consideration of skills. She further added that information and updates in relations to transport would be included in the Quarter 1 Update Report that was scheduled for the next meeting.

The Zero Carbon Manager described the approach to promoting the good work to influence behaviour change. She said that they had a dedicated communications strategy that utilised social media. She further made reference to the important work delivered by the Neighbourhood Teams who were supported by dedicated Climate Change Officers. She made reference to the number of green related community events and activities delivered and the work undertaken with schools.

The Zero Carbon Manager commented that all available levers and opportunities, at a local, regional, national and international level, were used to support, promote and influence on the issue of climate change.

The Strategic Lead, Resources & Programmes informed the Committee that the Executive would be considering a report titled 'Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation – Power Purchase Agreement' at their meeting of 28 June. He commented that this was an important development for the Council to further contribute to the reduction in the Council's own direct emissions and increase the provision of additional green energy to the Council. He stated that a report on this area of work would be considered by this Committee at the November meeting.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer, Zero Carbon Team added that progress against some aspects of work had slipped for good reason as it was important that local ambitions aligned to wider plans and strategies that were being developed at a Greater Manchester level, making reference to the GM Clean Air Plan and Places for Everyone. She further informed the Members that work was ongoing with the Facilities Management Team to improve staff recycling facilities across the estate, commenting that this could be a challenge in smaller locations where staff were located.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that the Council continued to lobby Government for additional support to enable the Council to drive forward and deliver at pace this important area of work. In regard to the comments regarding methane and food waste she stated that she would pick this up with the Food Board. In regard to the question asked in relation to Highways, she advised that a briefing note on this would be provided for Members. In response to the comments made regarding advertising across the city she said that she would discuss this with the Communications Team.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport commented that the work the Council had undertaken in relation to its approach to procurement and climate change was particularly important. She further paid tribute to the Green Summit that had been delivered with schools, adding that this was an example that clearly demonstrated civic leadership.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/36 Staff Business Travel and Active Travel Policy

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Transformation that provided information on the progress being made towards embedding a culture of sustainable staff travel within the council, as part of the Staff Travel policy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that the Staff Travel Policy was presented to the Personnel Committee in December 2021 with a subsequent launch of the policy in 2022;
- The relationship to the Our Manchester Strategy;
- Providing a progress update across a range of key initiatives; and
- Case studies.

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

- Welcoming the inclusion of case studies, commenting that these needed to be communicated widely with staff to promote behaviour change;

- Noting that staff working from home had reduced the number of commutes undertaken by staff;
- Welcoming the significant reduction in air miles reported;
- Was there enough appropriate bike storage space available to support staff travelling by bike across all sites;
- Noting that there was currently no reporting system in place that captured staff that walked during business hours as the data was expenses led, but welcomed that consideration to alternative methods of capturing this mode of active travel were under consideration;
- Welcoming that Beryl Bike hire was included in the expenses claim scheme; and
- Could the Cycle to Work Scheme allowance be used to purchase wet weather clothing.

The Director of HROD & Transformation acknowledged the comment regarding the impact staff working from home had on the number of commutes undertaken. He commented that this arrangement was specific to service need, however the use of technology, such as the use of Teams to conduct meetings had contributed to reducing the number of business journeys undertaken.

The Zero Carbon: Workforce Development Manager informed the Committee that an audit of bike storage facilities would be undertaken across the estate to ensure capacity was there to support staff travelling by bike. She acknowledged the comments regarding the need to capture staff walking data and stated that they were working with the Performance, Research and Intelligence Team to progress this. She added that data in relation to tram and bus travel would be included in any future update report to the Committee.

The Zero Carbon: Workforce Development Manager welcomed the positive feedback from the Members in relation to the case studies provided, adding that it was the intention to produce these in a video format that could be cascaded to staff through targeted communications, in addition to the written format. The Executive Member for Environment and Transport welcomed this approach and stated that this could be used to articulate good practice with partners across the city and support the stated ambitions described in 'Workstream 5 - Catalysing Change and Behaviour Change' that was considered under the previous agenda item.

The Zero Carbon: Workforce Development Manager responded to specific questions by advising that services and managers would be supported to set out how they would embed Zero Carbon into service delivery as part of their Service Plans and this included consideration of staff travel. She commented that these plans would be reviewed. The Director of HROD & Transformation stated that sustainable Staff Business Travel that was considered as part of Service Plans would need to then inform future work planning and workloads, acknowledging the comment from a Member regarding expectations placed upon staff if they were travelling to different locations for business but not using a car. It was further confirmed that the car leasing scheme for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles was available to all staff.

The Project Officer (Sustainable Business Travel) informed the Committee that the Cycle to Work Scheme was flexible and could be used to purchase wet weather

clothing and other cycling related products such as locks, parts for repairs etc. He further confirmed that this scheme could also be used to purchase electric bikes.

The Chair when welcoming the reduction in reported business travel commented that it was important to also understand this in the context of reduced staffing levels across the Council that was a result of budget reductions experienced over the years.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/37 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.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.