

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 October 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillors Collins, Holt, McCaul, Razaq, Wiest and Wright

Apologies: None received

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Samantha Nicholson, Director of Manchester Climate Change Agency

ECCNSC/23/50 Minutes

In moving the minutes, the Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team stated that a response to the written questions that were submitted after the previous meeting that related to ref. 'ECCNSC/23/46 Street Cleansing Programme and Campaigns Update' would be provided to the Member.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 September 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/51 Manchester Climate Change Partnership and Agency - Impact Report 2022-23

The Committee considered the report of Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency that presented the Impact Report that provided a concise overview of the activities delivered by the Partnership and Agency in support of the city's climate targets and objectives, as set out in the Manchester Climate Change Framework (2020-25) and its 2022 Update.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the purpose and structure of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership (MCCP) and Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA) Impact Report;
- Providing an overview of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership;
- An overview of key activities of the Partnership;
- Providing an overview of the Manchester Climate Change Agency; and
- An overview of key activities of the Agency.

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

- Welcoming the report and the clarification provided regarding the structure and role of the Agency and the Partnership;
- Recognising the progress made to date and welcoming the case studies provided;
- Welcoming that Manchester as a city had secured an A list rating from CDP, noting that to earn an A score from CDP, organisations must have shown environmental leadership, disclosing action on climate change, deforestation or water security;
- Noting recent national government announcements in relation to actions to address climate change and the negative impact this could have on the ambitions to reduce emissions;
- Would the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Trailblazer arrangements provide any additional powers or levers of influence to address climate change;
- Membership of the Partnership should not provide an opportunity for organisations to 'greenwash', and how were members of the Partnership monitored (Greenwashing was when an organisation spends more time and money on marketing itself as environmentally friendly than on actually minimising its environmental impact.);
- Was carbon offsetting accepted as an action by Partners (Carbon offset was a way to compensate for your emissions by funding an equivalent carbon dioxide saving elsewhere.);
- Consideration needed to be given to formally collating feedback from Partners, suggesting a stakeholder survey;
- The Partnership should engage with local Muslim communities and organisations, noting that Quranic teachings called for the protection of the planet;
- Noting that the scale of retrofitting of domestic and commercial properties required was a significant challenge for the city and was there a City Challenge on this specific activity;
- Noting the importance of green skills and training to facilitate and deliver retrofitting at scale;
- Welcoming the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board and supporting the launch of their manifesto and endorsing their priorities; and
- Consideration needed to be given as to how the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board could be brought together with local decision makers.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency welcomed the comments and feedback from the Committee in relation to the clarity that was provided, and she paid tribute to her team for their work. She said that the report would provide a useful document to promote and articulate the work of the Partnership and to encourage new members. She encouraged all Councillors to promote this through their networks.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency stated that she shared the Committee's concerns regarding recent national announcements in relation to activities to tackle climate change, adding that despite this the work of the Partnership would continue and actions would be taken locally, making reference to the development of the Local Plan and the In Our Nature programme as examples.

She advised that support was offered to organisation across the Partnership, making reference to the City Challenges groups, peer to peer learning, advisory groups and networking. She added that work was underway to consider opportunities to unlock additional investment from the private sector as it was recognised that this was key to delivering activities at the scale required.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency said that Manchester City Council was a key partner of the Partnership and continued to demonstrate and provide clear leadership on the issue of climate change and this was demonstrable through the progress made against the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency stated that the zero carbon by 2038 ambition was shared across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. She added that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Trailblazer would provide an opportunity to unlock additional investment to drive this programme of activity. She described that the details of this would be worked through, and the related plans would emerge over the next two years.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency welcomed the positive comments regarding the inclusion of case studies and stated that this were a small fraction of the wide range of activities undertaken across the Partnership. She addressed the issue of 'greenwashing' by commenting that the Partnership was alive to this issue and there were conditions to organisations joining and they had to commit to actions and to work collaboratively. In terms of monitoring and meaningful reporting, she stated that this was challenging and accepted this would be difficult due to different data sets used by different organisations and acknowledging that some organisations were local, whilst others were international, and it would be difficult to disaggregate the Manchester 'slice' from their activities.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency welcomed the comment from the Member regarding engaging with Muslim groups and organisations and that she would follow this up with the Member directly outside of the meeting. She made reference to the Our Faith Our Planet Network, an inter-faith network based in Manchester that focused on climate change action through engagement and education. The group were committed to creating a green, healthy and inclusive city that contributed to the Manchester Climate Change Strategy. Further she referenced the In Our Nature Project that had engaged with a range of different community groups across the city.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency addressed the issue raised relating to carbon offsetting by acknowledging this was a challenge. She said that the Partnership aimed to be inclusive and recognised that some organisations may choose to use this as a supplementary action to reduce their emissions. She added that it was understood that the Manchester could not achieve it's targets and stated ambition by solely using carbon offsetting.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency acknowledged the scale of domestic retrofitting required was a challenge. She described that funding was available to Registered Providers to deliver this work and referred to the Your Home Better scheme, an independent service delivered by retrofit experts, providing advice,

planning and delivery to help reduce the costs of bills as well as carbon emissions associated with home energy and heating. In addition, she said that the Bee Net Zero partnership offered advice and support to businesses to go green. The Bee Net Zero partnership united a range of organisations and support programmes from across Greater Manchester who were committed to making the transition as straightforward and cost-efficient as possible for businesses.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency commented that the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board consisted of people aged between 16 to 28 years of age and the ambition was to strengthen the links between the Board and local decision makers. She stated that the Partnership would continue to support the Board, including by developing and strengthening governance arrangements and support with grant funding applications to deliver projects.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that she would engage with the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board to discuss how they would wish to connect with decision makers in the Council and she would facilitate the progress of this as an action. She further stated that it was everyone's responsibility to take action to tackle the climate emergency. She reiterated the request for all Councillors to promote the work of the Partnership across their networks and she concluded by thanking the Committee for their continued support and challenge.

The Chair informed the Committee that Manchester's 2023 Emissions Report from the Manchester Climate Change Partnership and Agency would be submitted for consideration at the November meeting and the Work Programme would be updated to reflect this additional item.

Decision

1. The Committee welcome the continued commitment for the city to reduce its carbon emissions in line with the agreed carbon budget and for Manchester city and the wider Greater Manchester city region to become zero-carbon by 2038.
2. Endorsing the statement from the Executive Member for Environment and Transport who agreed to engage with the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board to discuss how they would wish to connect with decision makers in the Council.

ECCNSC/23/52 MCC Climate Change Action Plan – Quarter 2 Update Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update and overview of progress made in delivering the Council's refreshed CCAP during Quarter 2 2023-24 (July – September 2023). Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that all activity described related to the period in which the report was issued, in this instance July to September 2023;

- An update on CO₂ emissions, noting that emissions data related to the previous quarter due to billing and data monitoring being quarterly in arrears (i.e., April to June 2023);
- Key messages and achievements from Quarter 2, including the completion of the first tranche of new low carbon social housing in Newton Heath, the promotion of Plastic Free July and the Council co-hosting a Youth Sustainability Conference; and
- Informing that the Quarter 2 progress report would be published in an accessible format on the Council's website.

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

- The Committee criticised the lack of leadership from the government on the issue of climate change and called for the continued lobbying of government on this important issue;
- Noting the issues reported regarding the decarbonisation of the national grid, the Committee noted that a report on 'Power Purchase Agreement to Decarbonise the Energy Supply' was scheduled to be considered at the December meeting;
- Discussion of behaviour change and measurable KPIs, the Committee noted that a report on 'Neighbourhood Teams Engagement with Residents' was listed for consideration at the December meeting; and
- Noting that emissions from Streetlights had risen by 5% during Q1 2023-24 due to a change in National Government's emission conversion factors.

The Strategic Lead, Resources and Programmes said that lobbying of Government, the Shadow Secretary of State and the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero on the important issue of support to tackle climate change was undertaken by officers via the Core Cities Network.

The Zero Carbon Manager acknowledged the risk and challenge to the Council's ambitions presented by the national grid, noting the increased use of natural gas in the production of electricity had increased the carbon intensity of the national electricity system by 7%. She commented that despite national challenges the Council continued to be innovative and remained committed to taking actions to reducing its own emissions across a range of activities and initiatives.

In response to a question from a Member, the Zero Carbon Manager stated that the section that read '*Outlined in the new Manchester Housing Strategy is a commitment for the Housing Providers to retrofit a third of their total housing stock by 2023*' should be 2032 and this would be corrected.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/53 Waste and Recycling Update

The Committee considered the report of Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on progress in delivering waste, recycling, and fly-tip removal.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that waste disposal and recycling arrangements for Manchester and other Greater Manchester Authorities (except. Wigan) are managed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the operating contract for the disposal and recycling facilities, together with Household Waste Recycling Centre's (HWRCs) was delivered by Suez;
- Noting the Councils service provider Biffa were responsible for providing scheduled domestic waste and recycling bin collections; and reactive / pro-active (passageways and known hotspots) fly-tip removal services for defined land types;
- Describing how the activity contributed to the climate change agenda;
- Information on relevant national strategies;
- Performance data across a range of activity types;
- Information on the waste collection contract;
- Information on passageway collections and cleansing;
- Flytipping and the work to address this, including target hardening projects;
- Updates on commercial waste; flats above shops and Christmas collection arrangements; and
- Providing case studies across a range of activities described.

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

- Recycling opportunities needed to be promoted and encouraged in apartment blocks, especially the ability to recycle food waste;
- Was there any update since the report had been written regarding national policy, noting that The Waste Strategy (2018) had been subject to several delays;
- More information was sought on Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) and Keep Manchester Tidy (KMT) campaigns;
- Discussing the incidents of flytipping in Manchester and the comparative data provided against other local authorities;
- Noting that flytipping on non-council owned or no public-land was not removed in a timely manner;
- The experience of reporting flytipping and frustrations experienced.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team stated that there had been no further updates since the report had been produced in relation to national policy and they continued to lobby the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for updates, and that she shared the Committee's frustrations. She said that despite this Manchester and Greater Manchester were actively working to eliminate avoidable waste before the 2050 target presented in the Defra Waste Prevention Programme. She further commented that the work of KBT and KMT had been reported to the previous meeting, with officers in attendance. She stated that they were seeking to progress the request to establish a regular update to all members on their activities.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team address the discussion on the flytipping statistics that were presented in the report. She said that

there had been a spike in incidents post covid, however incidents of flytipping were still unacceptably high. In response to the comparative data provided she said that it was difficult to draw conclusions from this data as there was inconsistency across the authorities in how they collated their data. She advised that work was ongoing across Greater Manchester to consider this.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team said that teams would continue to work with landowners to ensure that flytipping was removed as they had a responsibility to remove waste, however ultimately cases could be referred for enforcement action to have it appropriately removed and disposed of. In response to a specific question, she said that when flytipping was removed but it had not been formally reported as a request for service this would not be included in the data.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team commented the questions asked by a Member relating to the recycling of litter picked waste would be addressed in a written response to be provided following his written submissions after the previous meeting.

The Project Officer, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team said that they would continue to work with building managers when requested to facilitate and support recycling in their buildings on behalf of the residents, particularly in regard to food waste and textiles. He said the service would continue to promote this offer with building managers. He advised that there was no legal requirement for buildings to provide food waste recycling facilities.

The Project Officer, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team acknowledged the comment from Members regarding the frustrations expressed in their attempts to report incidents of flytipping using the Councils CRM (Customer relationship management) system. He commented that the introduction of a new RDXP system should resolve the issues articulated.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods said that delays in the governments Waste Strategy (2018) was very frustrating, however Manchester had taken the decision to invest additional resources to address flytipping and develop initiatives to work with and support communities to tackle flytipping. She further paid tribute to the many volunteers across the city who were working to ensure Manchester was a clean and greener city. She called for all businesses and landowners to support this ambition.

The Chair in concluding this item of business welcomed the recycling data that had been provided and the information relating to the arrangements over the Christmas period.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/54 Single Use Plastics

The Committee considered the report of Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement; Strategic Lead – Resources and Programmes and the Sustainability Project Manager, Zero Carbon that provided an update on work being undertaken across the Council on Single Use Plastics (SUPs) as part of the action under Workstream 3 of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing a background to this work;
- updates on actions taken by the Council to deliver its pledge to eradicate the use of avoidable Single Use Plastics by the end of 2024;
- Information on the national ban on SUPs introduced by Government; and
- Providing an update on the communications and engagement work undertaken to reduce SUPs use within the Council and with businesses and residents across the city.

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

- Who had determined what was classed as avoidable or unavoidable plastic and was there a comprehensive list of what fell into which category;
- Welcoming the joint work on this issue across Greater Manchester;
- Lamenting the plans to deliver a circular economy had been rolled back by the government;
- Welcoming the Refill campaign and called for an increase in the number of Refill points to be delivered in public spaces;
- What monitoring was undertaken to ensure that all MCC Markets and Parks meet the Council's Single Use Plastic Free Pledge; and
- Would there be monitoring of business occupying units in the Wythenshawe Civic Centre to ensure that they were complying with the action to reducing single use plastics from across the Council's operational estates.

The Sustainability Project Manager stated that a report on how this work had been developed was reported to the Committee at the meeting of 8 December 2022 and she made reference to the Council working group that had contributed to the Council's SUPs Action Plan. She stated that a SUP Action Plan that was described within the report would be agreed by the SUP Working Group, and then passed for wider approval later this year.

The Sustainability Project Manager advised that the GM SUP group met quarterly and was an opportunity to share good practice and learning, share resources and explore opportunities to access additional funding. She stated that opportunities would also be explored to link with other core cities on this issue, however Manchester was leading on this issue.

The Sustainability Project Manager said that she would provide information following the meeting regarding the approach adopted by the Market Teams to ensure appropriate monitoring was undertaken to of MCC Markets and Parks, so they met the Council's Single Use Plastic Free Pledge. She added that the Christmas Market was monitored by the Specialist Markets Team.

The Sustainability Project Manager said that the ambition was to work with different landowners to explore all options to extend the refill scheme and all options for maximising opportunities would be considered by the established Task and Finish Group, however currently they had to work within the existing infrastructure. She advised that a trial had been conducted in Bury and this was subject to evaluation.

The Sustainability Project Manager stated that she would need to take away the specific request regarding arrangements for Wythenshawe Civic Centre however added that Licensing and Trading Standards would be working with businesses on this issue, adding the Councils Licensing Policy would have specific reference to SUP.

The Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement informed the Committee that meaningful data on Scope 3 emissions for suppliers should be available next year.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport said the Council had invested in additional resources to drive this work to support the Council's commitment to reducing emissions.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/55 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 under consideration of a previous agenda item it had been agreed to consider the Manchester's 2023 Emissions Report from the Manchester Climate Change Partnership and Agency at the November meeting.

Decision

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