

Climate Change Ward Action Plans Task and Finish Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 23 March 2023

Present:

Councillor Wright – In the Chair

Apologies: Councillors Doswell and Shilton Godwin

Also present:

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Samantha Nicholson, Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency
Jane Houldsworth, Deputy Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency
Mike Franks, Climate Emergency Manchester

ECCSC/CCWAP/23/3 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2023 as a correct record.

ECCSC/CCWAP/23/4 Approach To Establishing SMART Reporting Of The Outcomes of Climate Change Ward Action Plans

The Task and Finish Group considered the report of the Head of Neighbourhoods and the Strategic Lead (Neighbourhoods South) which considered the options for reporting approaches that recorded the outcomes, impact, and activity of Climate Ward Action Plans.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Consideration of the opportunities for the development of performance measures; and
- Other considerations.

The Chair reported that, while other Members of the Task and Finish Group had been unable to attend today's meeting, they had discussed their final recommendations ahead of the meeting and these were mainly reflected in the list of recommendations at the front of the report.

In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that the next update from Neighbourhood Teams is due to go to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee in December 2023. In response to a further question, the Head of Neighbourhoods advised that there was an opportunity to strengthen the plans following these Task and Finish Group meetings and that the strengthened plans would include a common set of metrics, for example, in relation to recycling but that

officers would also be considering setting bespoke measures for specific plans. She advised that officers would be able to provide an update at the December Scrutiny meeting in relation to this. The report will be presented alongside other related pieces of work including communications and carbon literacy. The Chair requested that when this report came to Scrutiny that it included some key performance indicators.

Referring to the recommendation in the report that “a consistent structure for all plans should be maintained with the addition of broader partner action and place-based initiatives section”, the Chair reported that it needed to be clear that these plans mainly provided targets for Council officers. She highlighted that, in a report submitted to the previous meeting, the action plan for Miles Platting and Newton Heath had included a separate section which was specific to that ward and reported that other Councillors would like similar in their ward and to have input into the content of this. She advised that this section and any aims within it could be agreed locally with Ward Councillors and residents and that these aims could be included in the action plan. The chair noted that for some measures, it would not be easy to include meaningful measures but recognised the ambition to make an impact should be recognised.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods highlighted that there were only three Climate Change Officers so, while they would be undertaking work across all wards, it was important to be realistic about what they could do, and that Ward Councillors needed to be aware of this and understand their role. The Chair advised that the Task and Finish Group wanted to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the role of the Climate Change Officers. The Strategic Lead (Neighbourhoods South) reported that the Climate Change Officers acted as expert advisors and that a resource of best practice examples had been developed which was shared with all Neighbourhoods staff and that this resource would continue to be built on.

Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers commented on measures that could be adopted and recognised that whilst there would be some commonality across plans, there may also be some measures that are ward specific.

The Director of Manchester Climate Change Agency commented that, while in the longer term the aim was to track the impact of this work, in the shorter term it could be useful to track engagement as part of the process towards achieving outcomes. She warned that sometimes setting targets, particularly around engagement, could lead to activities which were not necessarily beneficial but tracking what was happening could help to identify gaps in some wards.

The Chair highlighted the importance of targets being achievable, but also recognised that there was also merit tracking appropriate data without setting a target. The Chair stated that it was the view of the Task and Finish Group Members that the ward action plans should be published; however, she advised that, if they were published, it would need to be made very clear what they were for and who they were aimed at and about the targets and aims included in the documents. She noted that they would be living documents which would change and that this also needed to be clear.

The Head of Neighbourhoods recognised the importance of being clear about the role and purpose of the action plans when they were published and reported that officers were looking at reviewing the templates to make this clear. She acknowledged the Chair's point about these being living documents, stating that the version that was published would be a snapshot in time and the published version would be updated on an annual basis. The Chair asked whether it was possible to update the published version more frequently. The Head of Neighbourhoods stated that this could be considered. The Chair noted that it would be useful to include a review of the year in the published information to demonstrate overall impact across the whole year.

The Neighbourhood Officer (Climate Change) reported that she and her colleagues had been supporting officers to update their ward action plans on a quarterly basis. In response to a question from the Chair, the Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that the action plan for each ward should be being reviewed as part of the ward coordination process and would be included on the agenda for ward co-ordination meetings. The Chair recommended that the published version of the action plans be updated every 6 months, or at a minimum once a year.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport advised that consideration should be given to the narrative around the published plans, including a call to action for people reading it. The Strategic Lead (Neighbourhoods South) supported this comment and the importance of consistent, repeated messaging in order to trigger behaviour change, as well as including practical actions which were meaningful to people in local areas and specific to where they lived.

The Chair reported that she and the other Members of the Task and Finish Group recommended that a session be arranged for Ward Councillors, and possibly for officers too, on the role of the Climate Change Officers as some Councillors were not clear on their role.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport reported that, since the previous year, at least three sessions per year had been held for Ward Councillors to learn about the Council's zero carbon responsibilities and climate change action and that the role of Climate Change Officers could be included in that.

The Director of Manchester Climate Change Agency advised that her organisation had supported some of these briefings and could support the conversation including how the In Our Nature programme can support the Ward plans and Climate Change Officers. In response to a question from the Chair about In Our Nature, she outlined how this work linked into the ward plans and built on what was already in place, while bringing more people into the conversations, developing more projects which local residents could deliver and putting funding into the delivery of some of those projects. She reported that the projects delivered through In Our Nature would also have a focus on metrics and that the aim was to try to standardise some of these measures. She reported that part of this work would include creating a resource hub with case studies, 'how to' guides and other helpful information which other communities could use. She informed Members that as part of this work a ward-level carbon footprint would be developed for each ward which would be useful for groups

and individuals in that ward to help see where their emissions impact was highest and what they should tackle. She advised that this might be useful for tracking change over time but could not be used to demonstrate the impact from a particular piece of work.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods reported that when officers planned for events, the environmental impact was taken into account and that a lot of good practice was already taking place.

The Deputy Director of Manchester Climate Change Agency reported that the In Our Nature programme was funded by the National Lottery Climate Action Fund and that the Fund was working with organisations funded to undertake similar types of work in relation to climate action and engagement to share learning on measuring impacts which Manchester would benefit from in future.

A member of Climate Emergency Manchester welcomed the actions being taken but expressed concern that there was not sufficient urgency to this work and highlighted work taking place in Newcastle to reach net zero on carbon emissions by 2030. The Chair stated that those involved recognised the urgency of the situation and were doing what they could do as well as using their influence to affect change.

Decisions

1. That a consistent structure for all plans should be maintained with the addition of broader partner action and place-based initiatives section.
2. That KPIs are further developed with specific time bound targets attached to each action in Ward CCAPs; However, the ward-specific section may include activities which it is not easy to provide a meaningful measure for but which local residents want to take place and that officers should not be held to account for achieving targets in relation to these.
3. That progress on the development of plans and the development of KPIs be reported into Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual Neighbourhood Teams update. This will include progress on the delivery of the In Our Nature Programme. That when the action plans are submitted to the scrutiny committee later in the year, some KPIs should have already been incorporated into them.
4. That the ward action plans should be published, with clear information about what they are for and who they are aimed at, about the targets and aims included in the document and that they are living documents which will change. It is recommended that updated versions be published every 6 months or, at a minimum, annually. Consideration should also be given to including a review of the year.
5. To recommend that a session be arranged for Ward Councillors on the role of the Climate Change Officers, noting that this could be incorporated into existing briefing sessions.

ECCSC/CCWAP/23/5 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Task and Finish Group considered the terms of reference and future work programme and were invited to make any amendments.

The Chair stated that this would be the final meeting of the Task and Finish Group and that the Group's final report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

That this will be the final meeting of the Task and Finish Group and that the Group's final report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.