

# **Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 December 2024**

### **Present:**

Councillor Shilton Godwin (Chair) – in the Chair  
Councillors Hussain, Kirwin-McGinley, Mumtaz, Richards and Wiest

**Apologies:** Councillor Ilyas and Razaq

### **Also present:**

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport  
Councillor McCaul, Deputy Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport  
Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods  
Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods  
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources  
Councillor Simcock, Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee  
Mark Pollard, Head of Technical and Project Delivery, AGR Renewables

### **ECCNSC/24/47 Urgent Business**

The Chair informed the Committee that the Chorlton Cycleway scheme had recently won the category of 'Best Completed Scheme', awarded by Walk Ride GM, a group that campaigned for walking, wheeling and cycling in Greater Manchester.

The Chair presented the award to the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport and the Director of Highways.

### **ECCNSC/24/48 Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 November 2024 as a correct record.

### **ECCNSC/24/49 Local Area Energy Plan - Progress Update**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on Manchester City Council's activity in relation to the city's use of energy and how the city could move from using fossil fuels to greener, renewable energy supply, and ultimately supporting Manchester's journey to zero carbon by 2038.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing that Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) provided a roadmap for achieving Manchester's zero carbon target from an energy perspective;

- Describing progress to date since the last update report to Committee in July 2023;
- Discussion of the Net Zero Accelerator programme and Manchester's Local Net Zero Accelerator;
- Discussion of the opportunities to drive net zero investment as part of the regeneration plan for Wythenshawe;
- Progress and opportunities identified across different asset classes; and
- Next steps.

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

- Welcoming the progress reported and noting that this development contributed to a just transition and would contribute to addressing fuel poverty;
- How would the impact be assessed and reported;
- What were the environmental impacts of LAEP;
- An update on the options for delivery of a heat network in Wythenshawe; and
- Noting that it was reported that 12% of Manchester's total carbon emissions came from commercial buildings and that just 9% of commercial buildings in Manchester (170 buildings over 5,000m<sup>2</sup>) were responsible for over 60% of emissions from this sector and what was being done to address this.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that the issue of fuel poverty and a just transition was fully understood and acknowledged, adding that the LAEP would support the Manchester journey to becoming zero carbon by 2038. She added that the delivery of the LAEP would be evidence based and would inform decision making and the priority of delivery and investment. She said this approach would also inform the pipeline of associated projects as this work progressed. She said that ongoing evaluation and reporting was also required to be submitted to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Net Zero Programme Lead commented that capacity had been increased in the team to deliver the work and consideration was being given as to the future reporting of the impact of the LAEP, noting that the carbon emissions report for the city, produced by the Climate Change Agency/Partnership would capture the impact of the LAEP in future years.

The Assistant Director, Infrastructure & Environment commented that the LAEP would support opportunities to develop new initiatives and delivery of strategies such as the Manchester Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. She said the LAEP would also provide an opportunity to group projects and workstreams so that they were commercially attractive and best support residents and communities.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that whilst the report described the approach in one neighbourhood the development of the LAEP was mindful of the city as a whole and they were mindful of the fact that additional developments, such as an increase in electric vehicles would result in an increased demand for electricity. She reported that conversations were ongoing with Electricity North West to understand and model those projections.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that a feasibility study was underway to explore options for delivery of a potential heat network in Wythenshawe. She said this would also include exploring new innovations and technology as alternatives to natural gas.

The Net Zero Programme Lead commented that the Council had less direct control over commercial buildings however this sector had been identified as a priority action for the Climate Change Agency/Partnership.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport commented that conversations continued to address the issue of emissions from buildings that the Council had no direct control over. She added that the Committee would continue to be kept updated on the design and delivery of relevant projects, and she welcomed the comments and continued challenge from the Committee.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **ECCNSC/24/50 Manchester Power Purchase Agreement – Update Report**

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a progress report on the Council's renewable energy Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that the scheme where the Manchester PPA would be provided from was the Bicker Fen Solar Project, a Solar PV and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) hybrid renewable energy scheme being developed at Bicker Fen in Lincolnshire;
- Upon completion, the project was designed to generate clean renewable electricity equivalent to providing power for 18,000 households, while the adjacent 50MW BESS system would allow the energy generated to be stored and provide essential grid stability services;
- Describing that delivery of this project would contribute to the long-term reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and support the UK's commitment to a sustainable future;
- Noting that the development had been designed to mitigate flood risks;
- Describing the social value delivered through this project; and
- Information in relation to the ongoing operation of the PPA.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Simcock, Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. He stated that he was satisfied with the progress reported to date. He enquired if officers were confident that the project could be delivered on-time and in budget. He further enquired if the National Grid was prepared to work with the project.

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

- Welcoming the report and the progress reported;
- Thanking the officers for arranging a Members briefing on this project prior to the meeting;
- Was there any risk to the Manchester PPA offtake commencing by 30th September 2025;
- Noting the conversation on the previous agenda item and the projected increase in demand for electricity, would the PPA be able to meet this increased demand;
- The activity described demonstrated civic leadership on the issue of climate change; and
- Welcoming the reported social value annual contribution to Manchester of £38,000.

The Assistant Director, Commercial Governance and Corporate Energy commented that the issue of risk had been modelled and considered for a number of factors, including projected electricity offtake volumes and financial risk analysis, and that a detailed modelling exercises had been undertaken as part of the project planning. She said this modelling also included the zero carbon pathway and projections. She commented that a full equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment had also been undertaken. She said that the PPA would be providing c85% of the Council's forecast electricity requirements and this would be monitored. She said that additional power would be supplied from the existing provider arrangements, noting that there was a synergy between these arrangements to mitigate risk.

The Strategic Lead, Resources & Programmes commented that the PPA would significantly contribute to the zero carbon ambition for the city alongside the wealth of other activities and work that was regularly reported to the Committee.

Mark Pollard, Technical Director at AGR Renewables, commented that they continued to work with the National Grid and that there was vigorous oversight of the project, and this project remained on target for commencement of the PPA on 30 September 2025 date. He further commented that a site visit from Members could be accommodated, if required.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport expressed her appreciation to the Committee for their continued support and challenge during the delivery of this project. She further paid tribute to the project team at AGR Renewables, noting that they had been open to constructive dialogue throughout the whole process.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

**ECCNSC/24/51      Budget 2025/26**

**ECCNSC/24/52      Revenue Budget Update 2025/26**

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget. Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the officer developed options which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2025.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government was that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach; and
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position had been made in January.

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

- Noting that the budget needed to be considered in the context of 15 years of Public Sector cuts and austerity;
- Expressing concern regarding the use of reserves and the potential risk this potentially exposed the Council to, noting how important these had been during the local response to the Covid pandemic;
- How would the funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) packaging scheme be distributed across Greater Manchester;
- When would the Council next receive a shareholder dividend from Manchester Airport; and
- How did the budget and the associated officer proposals align with the Our Manchester Strategy (OMS).

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources said that the General Fund reserve balance at 31 March 2025 was forecast at £23.4m, adding that this was an appropriate level for Manchester. He said that any overspend, referring to the forecast overspend of £20m, would need to be met from this reserve fund and the General Fund reserve would need to be topped up in subsequent years. He commented that in previous years the dividend received from the Airport was used as smoothing reserves and could only be used once. He said that a dividend was not expected from the Airport in 2025/26 and possibly also not in 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that details relating to the allocation of funding realised from the EPR were yet to be finalised and the spending of this funding would be in accordance with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs guidance.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that following approval of a budget option, including Council Tax charges, these would be accompanied by an equality impact assessment and a statutory consultation. He clarified that that Council Tax assumptions were calculated on a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. The report described that a public consultation on proposed Council Tax levels and the savings measures put forward by officers would open on 25 November and run until 12 January 2025.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that all of the officer proposals presented in the report had been developed using the principles of the OMS. He said the options presented efficiency savings, increased income generation and transformation of services, and little or no service reduction to contribute to delivering a balanced budget. In response to a specific question relating to savings to be achieved through purchasing green energy he said that further detail would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Head of Finance, Core and Place responded to a question raised in relation to the table presented at section 4.3 of the report and clarified that this presented the current overall Council position. He said that this information would be updated following the release of the Local Government Finance Settlement, expected towards the end of the month.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

### **ECCNSC/24/53      Neighbourhood Services Budget 2025-28**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided a service overview and key priorities including an update on the Climate Change Action Plan, along with the latest draft budgets for the services within the remit of this scrutiny committee. The draft budget contained details of the already approved savings and investments, along with initial thoughts on other areas for consideration and comment as part of the budget process in order to help ensure an overall balanced budget.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- An overview and description of services and identified priorities;
- Service budgets and proposed changes;
- Savings plan for 2025/2026, noting that as part of identifying further savings options the initial priority had been to protect service delivery wherever possible, and this had included looking to increase income generation opportunities where possible;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Work force implications; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy/strategy considerations.

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

- Further information was sought in relation to the proposal to increased receipts from fixed penalty notices;
- Would the housing providers who would be required to fund the annual £47k disposal costs be able to meet this cost;
- What were the implications of the proposed reduction of 10% to the Neighbourhoods Development Budget;
- More information was requested in relation to the increased income from concession contracts; and
- Noting the experience in Alexandra Park, more use of Community Service orders should be used to maintain parks across the city.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that whilst the Council worked with a range of stakeholders, community groups and volunteers and their added value was recognised and appreciated they would never be used to replace statutory Council roles and responsibilities. He further commented that the approach adopted was to maximise the income generated from concessions in parks. With regard to the section of the report that referred to the Housing Provider, he said that this was to bring this in line with the other providers.

The Director of Communities stated that the increased fixed penalty notices charges would relate to those issued for fly tipping, fly posting and littering. She further commented that the Neighbourhoods Development Budget was available to support proactive and reactive initiatives in neighbourhoods in response to agreed priorities and the proposal for a reduction in the Neighbourhoods Development Budget, if accepted would be spread across the three Neighbourhood Teams.

The Chair, in concluding consideration of the budget items acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and officers to bring forward the options to deliver a balanced budget.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **ECCNSC/24/54      Neighbourhood Compliance Team Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of activities carried out by the Neighbourhood Compliance service area which were part of the Community Safety, Compliance and Enforcement Service.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Providing a description of the remit and responsibilities of the different teams;
- Providing a number of detailed case studies across a range of activities; and
- Consideration of challenges and future initiatives.

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

- Welcoming the report, noting that it provided the reader with an insight into the breadth of work that was undertaken on behalf of the residents of the city;
- Requesting that future reports include comparative data to allow improvements in service delivery and requests for service to be tracked;
- Did the Council have any influence as to where any unpaid work was delivered as part of the Magistrates Court sanctions;
- What was being done with flats above commercial properties;
- Was there any funding available to deliver additional alleygating schemes;
- Was there any funding available to deliver any additional CCTV equipment to help detect and prosecute perpetrators of fly tipping;
- Had there been any cost benefit analysis undertaken to understand if it would be more cost effective to offer unlimited free bulky collections rather than pay to have fly tipping removed;
- How many complaints were resolved informally;
- The importance of bringing empty homes back into use;
- Littering from vehicles; and
- Were there any legal encampments in Manchester for the traveller community.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety commented that the new reporting system that was being introduced would allow for comparative data to be extracted and this would be included in future reports. Noting the comments expressed regarding flats above commercial properties she made reference to work of the Intensive Neighbourhood Management Pilot that brought a range of Council departments together to deliver targeted activities. She stated that consideration would also be given as to how the impact of this and similar activities such as Action Days were captured and reported. She further advised that CCTV was a limited resource, and priority was given as to where this was deployed to tackle particular hotspots. She further commented that at present there was no additional funding available to deliver further alleygating schemes. She also confirmed that at present there were no legal encampments in Manchester for the traveller community.



The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety stated that there was a dedicated Empty Homes Team within the Homelessness Unit that worked with property owners, with the aim of bringing these properties back into use, noting that there was a variety of reasons as to why a property could be empty.

The Neighbourhood Manager – Neighbourhood Compliance commented that the sanctions imposed by the courts were solely the discretion of the magistrate. He commented that approximately two thirds of complaints were resolved informally. The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety added that they were currently in dialogue with the Probation Service to discuss where any unpaid work was delivered, noting a comment made by a Member regarding the positive impact delivery of this work had in a park in her ward.

The Neighbourhood Manager – Neighbourhood Compliance said that enforcement action would be taken in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice against the registered owner of a vehicle where litter had been dropped from and all reports would be investigated. He further added that any witnesses could be required to attend court to provide evidence.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that the issue of fly tipping was a national issue, commenting that in the previous three months there had been a reported 11,300 cases in Manchester. She said the cost to the Council of disposing of waste needed to be taken into consideration and more emphasis needed to be given to opportunities for community reusing and recycling. She said the Clean and Green Board was looking at this issue of fly tipping as a priority, noting the discussion in relation to the Our Manchester Strategy and the priority identified for Neighbourhoods to be attractive places with good homes, facilities and green spaces.

The Chair, in concluding this item of business, acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the team on behalf of the residents of the city and she requested that the Committee's appreciation be relayed to all staff concerned.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **ECCNSC/24/55 Overview of the Food, Health & Safety and Airport Team**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of the Food, Health & Safety and Airport service.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Discussion of the approach to food safety, hygiene and standards;
- Airport Border Control Post (BCP) and Port Health Authority, noting that Manchester Airport was designated as a BCP, meaning that imported products intended for commercial use in Great Britain could arrive at the BCP and after undergoing certain checks satisfactorily, could then enter the country;

- Discussion of the enforcement of Health and Safety at Work legislation in England, noting this responsibility was split between the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) and Local Authorities;
- Discussion of Public Health protection in relation to infectious disease control;
- Advice available to businesses, noting that the level of advice that could be provided during routine day to day work was limited due to resource and sometimes businesses required or requested more detailed advice;
- Providing a number of detailed case studies across a range of activities; and
- Consideration of challenges and future initiatives.

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

- If concerns were raised about a particular business premises would this result in enquiries being made into any other business the owner had control of;
- More needed to be done to raise awareness of the different rating systems;
- Expressing concern regarding the frequency of inspections set by the new Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) for local authority officers; and
- Expressing disappointment that it was not currently mandatory in England for food businesses to display their Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating.

The Compliance & Enforcement Specialist stated that the team followed all national guidance and clarified that FSDM related to food standards and not hygiene standards. She commented that if any concerns were raised in relation to food standards they would always investigate. She said that if concerns were raised regarding standards at a premises a risk assessment would be undertaken to inform any further enquiries and inspections of businesses controlled by that owner and provided examples of different scenarios. In response to a specific question relating to the transporting of food, noting the proliferation of bicycle food courier services she said they would investigate any complaints regarding unhygienic transportation.

In regard to the requirement to display Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) ratings, she commented that she acknowledged the Committee's frustration. She said that whilst the team worked with businesses regarding awareness of this issue the team was restricted to the amount of capacity they could dedicate to any specific proactive work. The Neighbourhood Manager commented that the FSA did work proactively with online platforms such as Just Eat to encourage them to promote ratings. She commented that the FSA also lobbied for a change to the national legislation.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods commented that she would continue to lobby the government for a change in the legislation and called for it to be mandatory in England for food businesses to display their Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating.

The Chair, in concluding this item of business, acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the team on behalf of the residents of the city and she requested that the Committee's appreciation be relayed to all staff concerned.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **ECCNSC/24/56      Progress update on the development of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035. It built on a previous report to Scrutiny Committees in July 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that The Our Manchester Strategy 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and was due to expire in 2025;
- Providing a summary of the second round of engagement activity;
- The findings that were most relevant to the remit of the Committee;
- An overview of the new strategy, noting that the OMS would focus on twelve priorities over the next ten years; and
- Following formal approval, the OMS 2025-2035 would be launched in April 2025.

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

- Recognising the range of positive community engagement, in particular with the Manchester Deaf Centre and the use of British Sign Language;
- Noting the experience of the Covid pandemic, would the OMS be flexible to respond to the changing needs of the city;
- Noting the relatively low figures presented in relation to the question asked about the priority about climate change;
- Noting that the views of young people were underrepresented in the consultation responses;
- Consideration needed to be given to the visual images used in the final published document; and
- As democratically elected representative of residents, how were the views of Councillors captured in the priorities.

The Head of City of Policy noted the comment made regarding the images used and stated that there existed a wealth of images that could be drawn upon to ensure the final document reflected the population of the city. He stated that the OMS was a ten-year strategy, and the priorities were flexible to respond to the changing needs of the city. He further commented that the OMS Strategy was a high-level strategy that articulated the priorities and ambitions for the city, and this would inform a range of specific Council strategies, such as the Housing Strategy. He said that an implementation plan would also be devised to accompany the OMS. He commented that progress on delivery of the OMS would be captured and reported in the annual State of the City report.

The Head of City of Policy stated that the Council had a distinct and unique civic leadership role on the issue of climate change and referred to the responses received

in relation to climate change and commented that these included a range of views, including climate change deniers and people questioning how the Council could respond and influence such a huge global issue. The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport commented that the Council had made significant progress in reducing its own carbon emissions and that the new Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan for 2025-30, that was currently being developed would include specific consideration of communications and resident engagement.

The Strategy & Economic Policy Manager stated that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken to inform the approach to the consultation exercise. He commented that a number of in person events had been undertaken, including Eid in the Park that had resulted in a large number of conversations, but not necessarily resulted in formal questionnaires being completed, however a summary of those conversations had been collated and included in the analysis. Regarding young people, he stated that a significant amount of intelligence and information had already been collected as part of the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the UNICEF Child Friendly City work and this wealth of data had also been utilised to inform the priorities, similarly the Age Friendly work undertaken was also captured. He commented that he welcomed the positive feedback from the Committee and thanked the range of external partners who had also supported this activity to deliver this work.

The Strategy & Economic Policy Manager commented that briefing sessions had been facilitated and had been a useful resource to inform where engagement activities had been targeted. He said that democratic approval would be provided as the report had been considered by all six scrutiny Committees and the final OMS would be subject to formal approval by the Executive and Council.

## **Decision**

The Committee recommend that the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee considers including an item on their work programme that considers community engagement with African and Pakistani communities and those of the Muslim faith in Manchester.

## **ECCNSC/24/57      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 informed the Committee that the Clean Air report would be vacated from the 13 February 2025 agenda to allow enough time to consider the Aviation and Manchester Airport item.

A Member requested that a report that considered the impact and outcomes of the Intensive Neighbourhood Management Pilot be included in the list of items to be scheduled, noting that this would likely be scheduled in the next municipal year.

## **Decision**

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