

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 4 September 2019

Present:

Councillor Igbon (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Butt, Flanagan, Harland, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Sadler, Whiston, White and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

Apologies: Councillor Appleby, Razaq and Strong

NESC/19/33 Urgent Business

The Chair introduced an item of urgent business following the discussions at the previous meeting where the Committee had agreed to establish a Subgroup to monitor Climate Change and the actions taken to mitigate this. The Chair invited Cllr Wright to address the Committee and detail both the objectives and key lines of enquiry of the Subgroup. The Committee were further informed of the proposed membership of the Subgroup and were invited to agree this.

The Chair further noted that following discussion at the previous meeting of the Great Ancoats Street Highways Scheme, and the provision of cycle lanes within the design she was disappointed with the response to the recommendation proposed by the Committee from the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport to the recommendation of the Committee. (See minute ref: NESC/19/24) The Committee voted unanimously in agreement with the Chair.

Decision

The Committee endorsed the following Objectives and Key Lines of Enquiry for the Climate Change Subgroup and agreed the membership:

Objectives

1. Monitor progress of each point of the Climate Emergency motion carried by Manchester City Council on 10 July 2019.
2. Ensure the Manchester Climate Change Action Plan includes specific, measurable targets and review progress towards achieving them, on a quarterly basis.
3. Identify additional measures which could be put into place by MCC or partners to help reach the zero carbon target.
4. Update the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee 4 times a year.

Key Lines of Enquiry

1. Obtain reports from all relevant Departments in relation to progress of the points in the climate emergency motion, ensuring that deadlines are met.
2. Obtain updates on progress of the production of the Climate Action Plan and regular updates once it is implemented.
3. Investigate initiatives which could be considered to help achieve zero carbon targets.
4. Obtain updates from each scrutiny committee to assess incorporation and progress of zero carbon actions in relation to each area of work.
5. Invite and obtain reports from relevant experts, including from Greater Manchester Combined Authority to assess existing actions and suggest new ones.

Membership

Councillors Flanagan, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lyons, Shilton Godwin, Whiston and Wright (Chair)

NESC/19/34 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 as a correct record.
2. To note the minutes of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group meeting of 24 July 2019.

NESC/19/35 War Memorials

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Highways and the Operations and Commissioning Director (Neighbourhoods) that outlined the work that both the Grounds Maintenance team and Public Realm team undertook to both maintain war monuments and manage memorials that were placed around the city.

The Director of Operations (Highways) referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- The total number of War Monuments in Manchester, last confirmed in 2009 was over 550;
- Ownership of these fell across numerous stakeholders including churches, private ownership, Council, other public sector bodies and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission;
- Information on the programme of monument maintenance;
- Information and examples of activities undertaken by the Public Realm Team with friends' groups to undertake improvements to War Monuments;
- Noting that the Public Realm Team would develop this further and work with the Neighbourhood Teams and Central Communications Team to develop a community engagement plan; and
- Information on memorial maintenance.

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

- Recognising the ultimate sacrifice made by many men and women from Manchester over the years to defend this country, and the importance of respecting and honouring their memory;
- Noting that many war memorials were now kept in storage, it would be better if options were considered to relocate these in schools, noting that this would facilitate children's learning and also provide a more dignified setting for such memorials;
- Noting with disappointment that many of the war memorials that had been located in the Town Hall had been placed in storage for duration of the restoration works rather than placed on public display or in schools;
- An audit of all war memorials should be undertaken and a list compiled that detailed their location, ownership and state of repair. This audit should include details of relevant Friends Groups and once completed this should be shared with all Councillors;
- An Our Manchester Approach should be used to engage with residents to encourage them to actively maintain war memorials throughout the year;
- A specific strategy should be developed that established an agreed, consistent maintenance and improvement standard for war memorials, including specialist maintenance and repair programmes;
- Council applications for funding needed to be coordinated with community group applications;
- What support was offered to support groups, such as The Royal British Legion when funding was refused;
- What contact had been established with various Faith groups; and
- The report failed to highlight the many positive examples, such as the sensitive relocation of the cenotaph in St Peter's Square, Phillips Park and the Battle of the Somme memorial located in Heaton Park.

The Head of Citywide Highways responded to the comments by stating that opportunities for relocating war memorials that were currently in storage to schools would be explored and he would discuss this further with colleagues from the Education Department. He informed the Members that ownership details were known but acknowledged that this was not comprehensive. He said that the team were passionate about improving the maintenance of war memorials and they were working with stakeholders to establish a maintenance regime.

The Head of Citywide Highways further commented that Neighbourhood Teams were working to actively engage with local community groups around the issue of maintenance of war memorials throughout the year and to offer support and advice to owners of war memorials. He said that this would be supported by a package of information that would be provided to owners and relevant groups. He further acknowledged the comment regarding the need for the establishment of a specific strategy regarding the maintenance of war memorials.

The Chair commented that this issue cut across a number of Executive Member portfolios and she would meet with them to discuss how this area of work could be progressed. A Member recommended that when an update report on this item was scheduled for consideration that the Executive Member for Children and Schools be invited to attend.

Decisions

The Committee: -

1. Recommend that an audit of all war memorials should be undertaken and a list compiled that detailed their location, ownership and state of repair. This audit should include details of relevant Friends Groups and once completed this should be shared with all Councillors.
2. Recommend that a specific strategy should be developed that established an agreed, consistent maintenance and improvement standard for war memorials, including any specialist maintenance and repair programmes.
3. Recommend that Neighbourhood Teams adopt an Our Manchester approach to engage with and encourage community groups to maintain war memorials throughout the year. Information on funding that is available to community groups to support this activity is also to be provided.
4. To receive an update report on this activity at an appropriate time.

NESC/19/36 Red and Amber School Crossings

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Highways that provided an update on the Red and Amber school crossings programme. The purpose of the works was to provide improvements at each school crossing so that their rating score was 50 points or less as per the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) "Census & Site Assessment" criteria that is the national standard.

The Director of Operations (Highways) referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- There were eighty-one school crossings in the programme that required improvements and they were located across most wards in the city.
- 44 of the 81 sites being completed or planned to be completed by the end of August 2019;
- The remainder due for completion by the end of March 2020; and
- The delivery of the improvements was through a new highways team comprising of a Project Manager, Construction Planner, Traffic Engineer, Quantity Surveyor, and Clerk of Works.

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

- Members questioned the accuracy of the information contained within the appendices, stating that some of the wards were listed incorrectly and noting that this had implications for notifications of works that were sent to Members;
- Questioning the use of the term 'completed' when referring to schemes;
- Thanking officers for their work to improve road safety at Park View School and that more needed to be done to promote and publicise with local resident the positive interventions undertaken by the Council to ensure the safety of school children;

- Communications between the Highways Department and the Education Department needed to be improved;
- Evaluation and assessment of improvements to road safety should be undertaken following completion of schemes and lessons learnt used to inform future schemes;
- Road safety around schools should be continually reviewed and assessed following completion of schemes;
- Clarification was sought regarding the 17 sites reported as being completed with a further 27 expected to be completed by the time of the committee meeting with a further 5 due by October and the remaining 32 sites being programmed for completion by March 2020; and
- How were schemes prioritised and priority should be given to those rated as Red.

The Head of Design, Commissioning & PMO informed the Committee that the report had been prepared in August to comply with reporting deadlines of the Committee and that the information that had been provided to compile the report from the Project Team. He also advised that the information relating to the wards in which the schools were located had been supplied by the Education Department.

In response to comments regarding specific schemes and whether or not these had been completed The Head of Design, Commissioning & PMO said that these would be checked and offered to undertake joint inspections with the Members. He described that some sites were more complex than others and needed the involvement of other agencies to deliver them and that works had been delivered over the school holiday period.

In response to the comments made regarding communications he acknowledged that problems had been experienced in the past and this was being addressed. He said that local residents would be sent a letter advising them of planned road works, information on the Council's website, letters to schools and email notification to relevant ward members.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport stated that the rating of amber or red was largely irrelevant as the intention was to improve all of them to ensure they were safe for children. She stated that the works had been delivered to maximise delivery during the school holiday period, and that planning of the more complex schemes continued to ensure all 81 schemes were completed by the end of March 2020. Noting the comments regarding the accuracy of wards in the report she advised that this would be reviewed.

The Chair encouraged all Members to review the information provided within the report and if there were any discrepancies in regard to schemes listed as completed to address this to the Highways Department. She further requested that the information provided be reviewed to ensure it was accurate and this to be then shared with all Members. The Chair welcomed the commitment from the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport to liaise with the Education Department to ensure ward information is consistent and accurate. She further stated that opportunities for promoting this positive work of the Council to ensure the safety of children be considered.

Decisions

The Committee: -

1. Recommend that a future update report is provided for consideration at an appropriate time. This report will include information on all school crossings delivered as part of this programme and comparative data of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) scoring following delivery of a scheme;
2. Recommend that Officers undertake a joint inspection of schemes with ward Members if requested to do so.

NESC/19/37 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.

The Chair informed the Committee that the report entitled 'Allocations Policy Review' that was scheduled for October is to be deferred to the November meeting.

A Member recommended that a representative from Biffa should be invited to the October meeting when the Committee would consider the report entitled 'Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Update'.

A Member recommended that the Homelessness report scheduled for November should include information on winter preparations, including an update on A Bed Every Night.

A Member recommended that a specific item be included on November meeting that addressed the issue of the provision of motorbike parking facilities, rather than as an item within the report listed as 'Highways Maintenance Programme'.

A Member recommended that the report listed for consideration at the December meeting entitled 'Improving journeys to and from school' include information on the activities to address vehicle idling outside and near schools, the promotion of active travel and the provision of school buses.

The Chair invited Members to consider any local community groups that they may wish to invite to contribute to any agenda items. The Chair requested that she be notified of any groups and invitations would be sent on behalf of the Committee.

Decision

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