

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 4 December 2019

Present:

Councillor Igbon (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Appleby, Butt, Flanagan, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Razaq, Whiston, White and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport
Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Reid, Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey
Anna Collins, Head of Sustainable Journeys, Transport for Greater Manchester
Nick Roberts, Head of Services & Commercial Development, Transport for Greater Manchester

Apologies: Councillor Azra Ali, Harland, and Sadler

NESC/19/48 Minutes silence for the victims of the London Bridge terrorist attack

The Committee and all those present observed a minute's silence for the victims and families of the recent London Bridge terrorist attack.

NESC/19/49 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 as a correct record.

NESC/19/50 Improving journeys to and from school including an update on Red and Amber School Crossings

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of the work being carried out to improve journeys to and from school. This included opportunities for children and schools to encourage reduced use of the car for school journeys and to encourage alternative modes of active travel, activities to reduce idling and an update on the provision of school buses, including for those children with education, health and care plans. The report also provided an update on Red and Amber School Crossing Improvements.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Describing the activities to promote active travel and to address vehicle idling near or outside schools;
- Information on Road Safety Week;

- Information on Red Routes;
- Information on activities undertaken during Clean Air week;
- Activities to address vehicle idling;
- The provision of school buses and travel passes; and
- Red and Amber School Crossing Improvements Update.

The Committee heard from the Neighbourhood Team Lead, South Neighbourhood Team who described the activities delivered in the Sharston ward area to promote active travel to schools and improve the school journey. He described that this had arisen in response to the increased levels of obesity in school children. He also explained that local schools had worked with a range of local services and partners to deliver an activity day in the local park. He described one of the initiatives had been to encourage children to undertake a survey of their route to school to help improve their journey. He said that the issues they had identified as being of concern to them were litter and irresponsible parking.

A Member of the Committee, who was a ward councillor for the area discussed, commended the excellent work that had been delivered with young people, despite the restraints on budgets. He said that it was very important to engage with and listen to the views of young people to better understand their concerns. He stated that improving the journey to schools for young people was not simply a Highways issue and required a multi service and multi-agency response.

The Chair acknowledged the comments and stated that there were a number of good examples across other wards of similar projects and these examples of good practice should be shared with all Councillors to help support and initiate this activity, adding that all schools should be encouraged to deliver similar projects.

Councillor Reid, Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey and former Chair of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group addressed the Committee. She stated that she welcomed the reported progress in delivering improvements to road safety. She stated that Members would benefit from a comprehensive list of all road safety improvement works delivered and if possible, provided with before and after photographs. This recommendation was supported by the Committee. Officers responded by stating this would be provided.

The Committee then heard from representatives from TfGM (Transport for Greater Manchester) who provided Members with an overview and statistics relating to the delivery of bus services to and from schools across Manchester; the approach to travel passes and activities to promote active travel and improving air quality. Noting the budgetary pressures and challenges to deliver this service; noting the significant growth in the student population over recent years; the large number of feeder schools into secondary provision and the complex nature of the bus network across the city.

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

- Consideration needed to be given to planning school bus routes, noting that some routes had been withdrawn following the start of the September term;
- What enforcement action was taken to address vehicle idling;

- What schools would benefit from Red Routes, which means that all vehicles (except buses) would not be allowed to stop where there were red lines; and
- Consideration should be given to purchasing and trialling the use of mobile portable bollards that could be used to prevent parking on pathways and zigzag road markings in identified hotspots outside of schools.

In response to a question regarding Red Routes, the Head of Design, Commissioning and PMO stated that the initial take up of this offer from schools had been low. He stated that schools would be canvassed again to enquire if they would be interested in implementing this at their school.

The Chair commented that an ongoing frustration for Members was inaccuracies within the list of schools provided and corresponding wards in which they were listed as being located. The Chair recommended that officers from the Education Department liaise with the Highways Department to ensure the records were current and accurate. Officers representing the Education Department gave an assurance that this would be done.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport acknowledged the suggestion of purchasing and trialling the use of portable bollards. She stated that contractors could be encouraged to discharge their Social Value obligations to contribute to the purchasing of these. She stated this would be looked into and information on how this could be developed further would be provided to the Committee.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport informed the Committee that a lot of action had been undertaken by schools to raise awareness amongst parents and carers in regard to the impact and harm resulting from vehicle idling, such as providing written information and discussing this at parent evenings and other appropriate opportunities.

The Chair concluded that Manchester Council had committed significant investment to improve road safety for the children living in the city and more needed to be done to publicise this positive story.

Decisions

The Committee;

1. Recommends that the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport gives consideration to purchasing and trialling the use of mobile portable bollards to prevent parking on pathways and zigzag road markings in identified hotspots outside of schools;
2. Recommend that the Education Department liaise with the Highways Department to ensure the lists of schools and wards in which they are located in are accurate.
3. Recommend that information detailing the road safety improvements works completed in each ward is circulated to all relevant ward Councillors, with photographs provided, if available.

NESC/19/51 Compliance and Enforcement Service - Performance in 2018/19

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on demand for and performance of the Compliance and Enforcement service during 2018/19. As requested by the Committee, the report also provides information on the activities undertaken around enforcement in relation to commercial waste enforcement, unlicensed drinking establishments, shisha businesses and management of waste associated with licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Providing a description of the various teams that made up the Compliance and Enforcement services;
- Information on the demand for services and comparative data;
- Various case studies to demonstrate enforcement activity;
- Describing proactive and project work across the city;
- Information on formal enforcement action including data on successful prosecutions by type of activity; and
- The approach to HMO Licensing and waste.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety informed the Committee that there was a correction to a figure presented in paragraph 2.7 of the report. She advised that the figure of 3389 should be corrected to 3627.

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

- Members welcomed the report and paid tribute to all of the staff delivering this important service on behalf of residents, in particular the Out Of Hours service;
- Acknowledging the proactive way in which the service deals with issues, and the importance of this in the context of budget reductions;
- Welcoming the inclusion of case studies, however requesting that where appropriate more detail be included in future reports and requesting that Members should be made aware of successes in advance of them being used as examples in reports;
- What could be done to assist those residents wishing to report illegal drinking establishments, noting that it was not always obvious as to which responsible authority would be responsible to address such issues;
- In regard to housing compliance, what legislation was used by officers to remedy housing issues that tenants experienced;
- What was the approach to using informal action rather than formal enforcement action;
- What action could be taken to address ambient noise, noting that the introduction of temporary 5G masts had resulted in an increase in incidents of this;
- How many notices had been served on builders, utilities companies and those contractors employed by the Council who operated outside of their permitted hours; and
- Further information was sought on the reported prosecutions of HMOs.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety acknowledged the positive comments from the Committee and stated that this would be relayed to the staff.

In response to the question regarding how members of the public could report issues associated with illegal drinking establishments, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that the most important thing was to inform the service, as residents were the most important source of information when dealing with this type of issue. She added that if a complaint or information was received and the LOOH team was not able to resolve the issue they would liaise with relevant partners to coordinate an appropriate response.

She noted the comment from a Member regarding the automated message when ringing the Out of Hours Team and stated that this was a corporate message and she would speak to colleagues in the Communications Team to enquire if this could be refined and also the options to promote this service using social media. She further welcomed the offers of assistance from Members to review the information available to residents in regard to reporting information.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety noted the comment from a Member regarding not receiving information on enforcement activity in his ward. She stated that all Members should receive information on this type of activity via their regular ward reports. She stated that she would look into this issue to ensure this was communicated in a timely manner.

In response to the enquiry regarding the approach to using informal action, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that this would be used to resolve issues where ever possible, however if this did not resolve an issue it would be escalated to formal enforcement action. In response to the specific enquires from Members regarding HMO prosecutions; ambient noise and the numbers of notices served on builders, utilities companies and those contractors employed by the Council who operated outside of their permitted hours, she stated that this information would be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration informed the Committee that the most appropriate legislation would be used to ensure disrepair issues experienced by tenants were resolved as quickly as possible. She encouraged Members to contact her if they had specific concerns where they believed this had not been the case.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods commented on the examples provided of seizures of tobacco. He stated that whilst some may appear to be relatively small quantities it was important to recognise that this activity was illegal and harmed communities and this criminal activity would not be tolerated.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Appleby declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as her partner is employed by Biffa.]

NESC/19/52 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.

Members recommended that the 'Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan – Update' report should be considered at the January meeting; the 'Planning and Compliance' report to be moved from the January 2020 meeting to the February 2020 meeting; and the 'Update on Selective Licensing Schemes' report be moved to the March 2020 meeting.

The Chair noted that the items listed for the January 2020 meeting titled 'Scheme Review – Princess Road / Princess Parkway' should be provided as a report for information, and due to time constraints on the Committee may not be debated.

Cllr Wright, Chair of the Climate Change Subgroup recommended that Cllrs Hassan and Lynch be appointed as members of the Subgroup. This recommendation was endorsed by the Committee.

Decisions

1. The Committee notes the report and approves the work programme subject to the above amendments.
2. To appoint Councillors Hassan and Lynch as members of the Climate Change Subgroup.