

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 8 January 2020

Present:

Councillor Igbon (Chair) – in the Chair

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

Also present:

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

Councillor Reid, Ward Member for Gorton and Abbey Hey

Marc Hudson, Climate Emergency Manchester

Megan Black, Head of Logistics and Environment, Transport for Greater Manchester

Stephen Bergquist, Community Engagement Manager (North West), Canal and River Trust

Hilary Wood, My Wild City, The Wildlife Trust

Julie Ryan, Friends of Ryebank Fields

Tara Parry, Friends of Ryebank Fields

Apologies: Councillor Sadler

NESC/20/1 Urgent Business

The Chair introduced an item of Urgent Business by inviting the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods to address the Committee on the reported changes to be introduced at Household Waste and Recycling Centres.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed the Members that the changes had been introduced by the GMCA who are the Waste Disposal authority for 9 authorities within Greater Manchester to stop the illegal use of household waste recycling centres by traders and other businesses; help businesses understand their legal obligations when disposing of waste and help monitor visitor numbers to stop illegal use by traders. Members were reminded that it was illegal to dispose of trade or business waste at any household waste recycling centres. Household waste recycling centres were only for residents to dispose of their household waste.

To deter traders Household Recycling Centres would be introducing limits on the number of times centres could be used by residents of Greater Manchester (excluding Wigan) each year, dependent on the type of vehicle used. Automatic number plate recognition systems and new access restrictions at all household waste recycling centres would help monitor visitors and identify illegal use.

The Committee heard from Councillor Reid, Ward Member for Gorton and Abbey Hey who stated that there was an area within her ward that had been blighted by fly tipping. She expressed her concerns that the changes proposed would increase

incidents of fly tipping and Members should have been informed of these changes in advance of any press reports.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that he was aware of the issues in the Gorton and Abbey Hey area raised by Councillor Reid and informed Members that fly tipping hotspots continue to be targeted for enforcement action taken against identified perpetrators.

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

- Condemning the recent violent attack on a member of staff by a member of the public at the Longley Lane Recycling Centre;
- Members expressed disappointment that they had not been made aware of the changes until this had been reported in the Manchester Evening News and contact from concerned residents;
- Communication with Members in relation to any service change needed to be improved, and provided regardless of the time of year or periods of purdah;
- The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and/or Officers should have addressed some of the inaccuracies within the press reporting;
- Staff at the Reliance Street Centre had been witnessed facilitating the disposal of trade waste and they should be instructed to cease this immediately;
- The vehicle registration of these trade vehicles attending Reliance Street and disposing of waste illegally should be recorded and passed to the Environment Agency to pursue an investigation and prosecution; and
- Would the changes to the service be reviewed.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing informed the Committee that a Subgroup had been established to monitor the implementation and impact of the revised service. Members recommended that an evaluation report of the revised service be submitted for consideration at the Committee's September 2020 meeting. Members further recommended that information on the communications framework, including that during periods of purdah be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods acknowledged the comments regarding communication with Members.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods made reference to the recent violent attack on a member of staff at the Longley Lane Recycling Centre. He stated that this criminal act was unacceptable and the health and safety of all staff working at these sites was paramount. He informed the Committee that pending full training following this incident, staff had been advised not to challenge members of the public. He stated this decision had been taken in consultation with the Trade Unions.

Decisions

The Committee;

1. Recommended that an evaluation report on the revised service be submitted for consideration at the Committee's September 2020 meeting.

2. Recommended that information on the communications framework, including that during periods of purdah be provided to all scrutiny committees at an appropriate time.

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

NESC/20/2 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 as a correct record.

NESC/20/3 The Councils Updated Financial Strategy and Budget Reports 2020/21

(Cllr Flanagan in the Chair during consideration of the Homelessness Budget 2020/21 report)

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position and set out the next steps in the budget process. In doing so, the report outlined Officer proposals for how the Council could deliver a balanced budget for 2020/21.

In conjunction to the above, the Committee also received and considered the draft Council Business Plan for 2020/21, the Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Report 2020/21 and the Homelessness Budget 2020/21.

Officers highlighted that the 2020/21 budget would be a one year roll over budget. It would reflect the fact the Council had declared a climate emergency and would also continue to reflect the priorities identified in the previous three-year budget strategy.

Taken together, the reports illustrated how the directorate would work to deliver the Our Corporate Plan and progress towards the vision set out in the Our Manchester Strategy.

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

- Welcoming Zero Carbon Manchester being identified as a priority within the Council Business Plan 2020-21, and what funding had been allocated to support this important activity;
- In recognition of the Climate Emergency declared by Council in July 2019 could money from the General Fund Reserve be used to support climate change activity;
- When setting future budgets, reports needed to be explicit in how budgets and plans were addressing carbon emissions;
- Welcoming the reported increase in the rates of domestic recycling;
- What was the cost to the Council to deal with illegal fly tipping;

- What was being done to address fly tipping and had the investment to tackle fly tipping (£500k) as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process achieved value for money;
- Clarification was sought in regard to the Highways Capital Programme for 2022/23;
- All wards needed targeted enforcement action by Neighbourhood Teams;
- A request that the outcome of the independent BAME staff review be shared with the Committee;
- A Member called for additional support and investment for Wythenshawe district centre;
- What was being done to reduce the spend on temporary accommodation to support people experiencing homelessness;
- What was being done to ensure temporary accommodation was safe and suitable for people;
- An update was sought on the proposals to purchase properties to accommodate homeless families;
- Recognising the impact of increased workloads on those staff employed to support homeless people;
- The need to reduce the numbers of families housed in temporary accommodation outside of the area, commenting that families received different levels of support depending on where they were placed;
- Welcoming the inclusion of Social Workers located within the Rough Sleepers Team to support teams and helping vulnerable residents;
- Concern was expressed that the funding arrangements to tackle homelessness from central government were piecemeal and precarious; and
- Consideration needed to be given as to how budget information was presented and the narrative clear to ensure the correct information was relayed to residents.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods), in response to a question from a Member confirmed that the options presented were for setting a 12 month budget for the Council and the Neighbourhoods Directorate was not losing any funding and there were no proposed reduction in staff posts or services.

In response to the comments regarding climate change and allocated resources, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) stated that the Our Corporate Plan priorities had been refreshed for 2020-21 to reflect the city's zero carbon ambitions and declaration of the climate emergency. She described that whilst no specific additional funding was specifically identified in the report, she reassured the Committee that work was ongoing within existing resources.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport responded to the comment that information on the resources and finances allocated to support climate change activity, referenced the £300k allocated to City Policy to support this work and described how outcomes would be measured should be report by stating that there was a lot of work already underway to address the issue of carbon emissions. She stated this would continue to be reported to the Committee and she welcomed the challenge presented by Members. She further commented that the Climate Change Subgroup would also continue to monitor progress and activity against this important issue.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources acknowledged the comment from the Chair regarding the use of the General Fund Reserve to support climate change and reducing emissions activity. He stated that consideration would be given to this.

In response to the questions regarding activities to address fly tipping and the use of the additional £500k investment, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that this had been used to fund additional Enforcement Officer posts to undertake a programme of business inspections to ensure appropriate and sufficient waste management arrangements were in place; investment in additional CCTV cameras; target hardening projects, to design out fly tipping hotspots by installing physical measures to deter fly-tippers and supporting environmental improvement projects. He stated that this activity was undertaken across all of the city and not just in the city centre. He referred Members to the report that had been submitted to the October 2019 meeting that provided detail of the activities to improve waste, recycling and street cleansing.

In response to the question regarding Highways Capital Programme for 2022/23, the Head of Network Management stated that the future funding arrangements from central government were still to be confirmed so they were currently unable to provide any further details. He said that a review of the benefits realised from the five year highways investment programme would be undertaken, and the findings of this would inform the business case for future investment.

In response to the point raised regarding Wythenshawe District Centre, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that he would feed the comments from the Member back to the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration.

The Chair informed the Committee that the independent BAME staff review would be scrutinised by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. She requested that when the report was made available that this be shared with the Members of the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

In response to the questions arising from consideration of the Homelessness Budget 2020/21 report, the Deputy Leader stated that the Council was still awaiting confirmation of the financial arrangements to deliver support for homeless people in Manchester. She stated that currently the financial position indicated that the service would be £800k worse off than last year, despite the increased demand on services. She called for an end to Section 21 Notices and increased security for tenants within the private rented sector. She further paid tribute to all of the staff working in the homeless service for their continued dedication, compassion and hard work to support some of the most vulnerable residents in Manchester.

The Director of Homelessness stated the most effective method to reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation was to invest and deliver homeless prevention services. He made reference to a range of prevention initiatives, including the work of the Section 21 team that was considered by Committee at their meeting of 19 June 2019, the work of the Private Rented Sector team within the Homelessness Department work to source settled accommodation for homeless households, the

move towards delivering homeless advice in local neighbourhoods and the recent changes to the Housing Allocations Policy.

The Director of Homelessness further informed the Committee that currently 21 properties had been purchased to house homeless families, with a further 16 at conveyance stage. He said that a cost benefit analysis of this approach would be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of this model. He also stated that the ambition was to bring homeless residents housed in temporary accommodation out of area back into Manchester, noting the disruption out of area placements could have on people and their families. In response to the quality and standards of temporary accommodation that was used to house people, he stated that properties were inspected by teams of officers and information on this had been shared previously with the Committee. He further advised that the contract for temporary accommodation would be reviewed and standards and quality would inform this review.

Decision

The Committee recommend that their comments be submitted for consideration by the Executive at their meeting of 15 January 2020.

[Councillor Appleby declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as her partner is employed by Biffa and Councillor Igbon declared a prejudicial interest and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the Homelessness Budget report.]

NESC/20/4 Petition for Debate - Declare a Climate Emergency

The Committee considered the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of a petition to 'Declare a Climate Emergency'. The report also outlined the procedure for the Committee to debate the petition in accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme.

The Committee heard from Mr Marc Hudson, Climate Emergency Manchester. He thanked the Members for having the courage to declare a climate emergency, commenting that climate change was a very significant concern for residents of the city. He made reference to the previous attempts and announcements to tackle climate change and expressed his disappointment that following a Freedom of Information request he had learned that no additional funding had been allocated to support the climate emergency motion.

Mr Hudson called upon all Members to lead by example within their respective wards, to take local action to mitigate climate change. He said this would help raise awareness of the issue and raise morale of residents. He called upon Members to vigorously scrutinise and challenge the actions and plans to reduce carbon emissions. He further suggested that consideration should be given to establishing an additional scrutiny committee to ensure enough time was allocated to effectively scrutinise this area of activity, noting the large remit of the current committee.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport thanked Mr Hudson and all of the residents who had signed the petition for their enthusiasm and passion.

In direct response to the specific ask of the petition she stated that a climate emergency had been declared; the Tyndall Centre were currently looking at aviation emissions and would present their findings to the Committee and they would be attending the next meeting of the Climate Change Subgroup.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport further commented that the Council was now working on the production of a new 5 year Climate Change Action Plan which would replace the 2016-2020 plan and would reflect the establishment of science-based carbon reduction targets for Manchester and the recent Climate Emergency Motion. She advised that the Committee and the Climate Change Subgroup would have the opportunity to monitor this progress.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport informed the Committee that the Council was making an additional £300k available to the Corporate Core to support the delivery of this agenda. This included increased support for the Climate Change Agency to support its work across the city. In addition, a number of capital schemes were being funded such as the Civic Quarter Heat Network and the Carbon Reduction Programme aimed at reducing carbon emissions from buildings. She commented that Manchester was leading the way in regard to reducing its carbon emissions and would continue to seek to influence partners locally, nationally and internationally to respond to the issue of climate change.

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

- Recognising the importance of this issue and the impact this had on residents; and
- Recognising that everyone needed to be engaged with and act on this issue.

In reaching their formal decision the Chair informed all those present that the item was being considered within the context of the Council's Petitions Scheme, and the decision reached was not a reflection of the importance the Committee placed on this issue.

Decision

The Committee note the petition, and recommend that no action is taken.

NESC/20/5 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan, including: Annual update and a report on the Tree Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Development and Deputy Chief Executive that provided the annual update on the delivery of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) implementation plan together with information on the delivery of the Tree Action Plan.

The Principal Policy Officer referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Providing a general introduction and background to the G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan;
- Information on the Tree Action Plan;
- The importance of our green and blue infrastructure in responding to the Council's climate emergency declaration;
- Key delivery highlights from the G&BI Strategy and progress in 2019, including case studies; and
- Key delivery highlights from the Tree Action Plan 2019.

The Committee heard from Julie Ryan, Friends of Ryebank Fields. She spoke to the Committee and stated that the Ryebank Fields area of land did not appear on the published Brownfield Land Register and therefore it was their assertion that any plans to build housing on Ryebank Fields was contrary to local and national planning policy. She stated that this land was green belt land with similar status to other protected locations within the area, and as such should not be used for development. She stated that they had attempted to obtain clarification on this issue by writing to senior officers within the Council but had not received any reply to date. She stated that following recent correspondence with the Manchester Metropolitan University the group had concerns that attempts would be made to reclassify this area of land to brownfield status and she called upon the Committee to scrutinise this issue.

The Committee then heard from Stephen Bergquist, Community Engagement Manager (North West), Canal and River Trust and Hilary Wood, My Wild City, The Wildlife Trust who described the range of engagement events and initiatives that their respective organisations were involved with to support the G&BI Strategy.

The Committee were shown a video presentation, created by The Wildlife Trust entitled 'My Wild City' that showcased a local park and described the many benefits of green spaces.

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

- Acknowledging the improvements delivered within the city by the Canal and River Trust and requesting that similar improvements were delivered in other areas of the canal network, commenting upon the dedication and important work of local volunteers;
- Recognising the importance of green space and the many benefits that these delivered within neighbourhoods;
- Recognising the importance of partnership working to deliver and improve green and blue spaces;
- Developers needed to share the vision for the city and the planning service should use their influence to maximise the delivery of green and blue schemes, including the delivery of green walls in urban areas to encourage bio diversity;
- Recognising the importance of trees to capture carbon;
- Social Housing providers should be encouraged to promote and coordinate a programme of tree planting;
- The number of trees lost over the previous two decades had been calculated to be significant and enforcement action should be taken against anyone responsible for the illegal felling of trees; and

- How trees located on the highway were inspected.

The Tree Officer confirmed that trees located on highways were regularly inspected and maintained. He further described that enforcement action would be taken against the illegal removal of a tree that had Tree Preservation Order status.

The Chair informed the Members that a report on Planning and Compliance was scheduled to be considered by the Committee at their meeting of 5 February 2020. She advised that this would be an opportunity to discuss the role of planning and how this could be used to influence this area of activity in further detail.

In response to the comment regarding the Canal and River Trust supporting projects in other areas of the canal network within the city, she requested that the representative meet with the Member following the meeting to discuss this further.

Decision

The Committee note the report.

NESC/20/6 Greater Manchester's Clean Air Plan - Tackling Nitrogen Dioxide Exceedances at the Roadside - Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) that described the progress that had been made following the Government's response to Greater Manchester's Outline Business Case to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide Exceedances at the Roadside, and the implications for the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities in relation to the schedule of work and statutory consultation on the Clean Air Plan.

The Committee had been invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 15 January 2020.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing progress to date in relation to the introduction of a Clean Air Zone;
- Information on the approach to vehicle idling and the intention to undertake more awareness raising campaigns to inform of the health impacts that idling had on air quality.; and
- Next steps.

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

- Welcoming the proposed Clean Taxi Fund, to support the upgrade of non-compliant Greater Manchester Licensed taxi and private hire vehicles;
- What was being done to improve the taxi fleet across Greater Manchester;
- Noting that that report did not address the issue of particulate matter, commenting that brake wear and tyre wear directly contributed to particle pollution from road transport; and
- What were the proposals to support smaller, local coach companies.

The Head of Local Planning and Infrastructure informed the Members that negotiations were still currently ongoing with central government regarding funding for the Clean Taxi Fund. He also confirmed that consideration would be given as to how to compensate smaller, local coach companies. He further commented that all proposals would be subject to formal consultation.

The Head of Local Planning and Infrastructure responded to the comments regarding particulate matter by informing Members that this issue was likely to be addressed in the Environment Bill that was announced in the Queen's Speech in December 2019.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport expressed her frustration that despite government announcements to invest in the North, to date no funding had been provided by central government to Greater Manchester to support commercial vehicle owners to make the transition to cleaner vehicles as part of the ambition to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide Exceedances at the Roadside. She also emphasised that Manchester remained committed to promoting improved public transport and active travel, however increased levels of investment from Government was required to support this. She emphasised how important this work was in supporting the city's emissions targets and its objective of improving health outcomes for Manchester citizens.

The Chair encouraged all Members and citizens, if they had not already done so, to complete the TfGM consultation response on 'Doing Buses Differently' that would close on the 8 January 2020. The Chair further reminded Members that a report on taxi licensing and the activities across Greater Manchester to improve standards was scheduled to be considered by the Committee at their meeting of 4 March 2020.

Decisions

The Committee endorse the recommendations contained within the report that the Executive:

- a) note progress made to date;
- b) note the ministerial direction under the Environment Act 1995 (Greater Manchester) Air Quality Direction 2019 which requires all ten of the Greater Manchester local authorities to implement a charging Clean Air Zone Class C across the region;
- c) agree the need to continue to proceed towards developing the implementation and contract arrangements of a charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in Greater Manchester utilising the initial tranche of £36m of funding as required by the ministerial direction / feedback;
- d) delegate authority to Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport to determine the preparatory implementation and contract arrangements that need to be undertaken utilising the initial tranche of £36m of funding to deliver the CAZ and other GM CAP measures, as set out at paragraph 3.11;

- e) note that the report to determine the timings for commencing the consultation will be received in the Spring of 2020;
- f) note the outstanding need to secure a clear response from the Government on clean vehicles funding asks;
- g) ask officers to work with TfGM to develop a business case and funding strategy for submission to Government to deliver a zero carbon bus fleet as quickly as possible; noting the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions from transport and to reduce nitrogen oxide exceedances towards which buses currently make a major contribution, particularly within the city centre;
- h) note that Highways England has not been directed to act in relation to tackling NO2 exceedances in the same way as the Greater Manchester local authorities, and that this will leave some publicly accessible areas of GM adjacent to trunk roads managed by Highways England, with NO2 exceedances that are not being addressed by the Highways England plan;
- i) delegate authority to Chief Executive to agree the final content and submission of the documents listed in Appendix One for formal submission to JAQU and note their Publication status;
- j) delegate authority to Chief Executive to determine any further technical reports for formal submission to JAQU; and
- k) note that the Executive member for the Environment, Planning and Transport will co-sign a letter from the GM Authorities to the Secretary of State for Transport asking them to bring forward the launch of a statutory consultation to strengthen rules on vehicle idling.

NESC/20/7 A5103 Princess Road speed limit evaluation

The Committee received a briefing note that had been prepared by the Director of Highways to review the impact of the introduction of the 30 mph speed limit on Princess Road/ Parkway.

Members paid tribute to the work of local residents, ward Councillors and officers for delivering the reported improvements in road safety.

Decision

The Committee note the report.

NESC/20/8 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.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and approves the work programme.