

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 5 February 2020

Present:

Councillor Igbon (Chair) – in the Chair

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

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

Jonny Sadler, Programme Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

Dr Chris Jones, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

Apologies: Councillor Appleby and Lyons

NESC/20/9 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 as a correct record.

NESC/20/10 Updated Financial Strategy and Budget Reports 2020/21

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update on the Council's overall financial position and set out the next steps in the budget process, including scrutiny of the budget proposals and budget report by this Committee.

In conjunction to the above, the Committee also considered the Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Report 2020/21 that provided a further updated Neighbourhoods medium term financial plan, and budget proposals for 2020/21. The report had been updated in order to reflect feedback from the January round of scrutiny meetings on the original draft proposals.

The Committee also considered the updated Homelessness Budget 2020/21 report that had been produced to reflect feedback from Members at their meeting of 8 January 2020, the outcome of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and other government funding notifications. It further set out the Directorate's budget proposals and strategy for 2020/21.

The proposed 2020/21 budget would reflect the fact the Council had declared a climate emergency by making carbon reduction a key consideration in the Council's planning and budget proposals.

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

- Information was sought on the charging policy and car parks;
- Information was sought on how the revenue collected from bus lane fines was allocated;
- Was there any intention to continue co-locating staff from the Housing Benefit Team within the Homelessness Team to assist in maximising residents' entitlement to Housing Benefit;
- A holistic approach was required between Children's Services and the Homelessness Department to adequately fund transport arrangements to enable families and their children to continue to attend their school when placed out of area in temporary accommodation; and
- The funding arrangements from central government provided to support homeless people were not consistent and were often short term which could result in services being vulnerable.

Officers responded by advising that information on the charging policy and car parks would be provided following this meeting to Members and the revenue from bus lane fines was ring fenced.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources acknowledged the comment regarding adequately funding transport arrangements to enable families and their children to continue to attend their school when placed out of area in temporary accommodation. He stated that he would address this with officers, the Executive Member for Children and Schools and the Deputy Leader with responsibility for homelessness.

The Strategic Lead, Homelessness stated that they continued to lobby government for adequate, long term funding to support homeless people and she confirmed that the strategic vision was to use temporary accommodation within the city where possible, rather than out of area. Officers commented that the specific budget cost of temporary accommodation, whether in Manchester or out of area was approximately the same; however, they acknowledged a comment from a Member that there were additional budget costs associated with out of area placements, such as travel to school as discussed.

The Chair stated that she welcomed the work of the homelessness team to support some of the most vulnerable people across the city. She stated that the response to the issue of homelessness should be system wide, including health partners, children's and adults' services and population health. She further supported services and teams co-locating to support homeless families, such as early years' services.

Decision

The Committee recommend that their comments be submitted for consideration by the Executive at their meeting of 12 February 2020.

NESC/20/11 Climate Change

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City

Treasurer that provided an update on progress to develop the city-wide and Council plans to address climate change, noting that the Manchester Climate Change Partnership and Agency had developed information to support organisations in Manchester to play their full part in achieving the commitment for the city as a whole to adopt a carbon budget of 15 million tonnes of CO₂ between 2018 and 2100. This would require a year-on-year reduction of at least 13%, emissions to be halved within five years, and lead to the city becoming zero carbon by 2038 at the latest.

The Committee received a progress update on the development of the city-wide Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25, and Tyndall Centre review of targets and the draft Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 for consideration and comment.

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

- Concern was expressed about the Council's scrutiny process for agreeing the proposed targets and agreeing an action plan for the City Council, in particular given the commitment to an open and transparent process. Clarification was sought as to the decision making process and the level of scrutiny;
- Reiterating the need for immediate action to reduce the city's CO₂ emissions;
- What additional resources had been allocated to support this activity following the declaration of the Climate Emergency motion;
- What contingency plans were in place to mitigate the withdrawal of European funding;
- How did Manchester compare to other cities, both nationally and internationally in its response to climate change;
- Members and residents needed to be confident that the Council was responding to the issue of climate change and taking all of the actions available to it;
- Information on what the Council had been doing to address climate change needed to be reported so progress could be measured against this;
- Concern was expressed regarding the extraction of chemicals used in LED lighting and batteries and enquired if this was ethically sourced;
- The Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 needed to measure carbon reduction in tonnes so as to align with the decision to adopt a carbon budget and to assist with the monitoring of progress;
- A more ambitious plan for the planting of trees needed to be implemented;
- Emissions from the aviation industry needed to be addressed;
- Planning policy should be used to promote more sustainable journeys to and from the airport; and
- The importance of engaging with young people on the issue of climate change, including using faith and other community based groups.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport responded to the question regarding the decision making process. She informed the Members that the Executive would be invited to formally adopt the science-based targets in line with the Paris Agreement and endorse the Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 framework on behalf of the City and approve the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 at their meeting of 11 March 2020.

Members recommended that the Committee have an opportunity to scrutinise the reports that were to be considered by the Executive at their March meeting and any comments and formal recommendations that arose were to be forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

Dr Jones, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research informed the Members that they had reported their findings to the Climate Change Subgroup in January and that based on current scientific analysis the draft recommendations and key points in regard to direct emissions were for Manchester to retain the existing 15 MtCO₂ carbon budget; to revisit carbon budgets in five years or in response to a new scientific synthesis report; focus on above 13% per annum reduction rate and meeting interim budgets; noting that delays in achieving the 13% per annum reductions would require higher reduction rates in subsequent years; noting that in relation to a date to become zero carbon, this was determined by historic emissions and the reduction rate then required in future years to stay within the 15m tonne budget i.e. the zero carbon date would change if the 13% average annual reduction target was not met; and that in relation to the potential 2030 zero carbon date, insufficient detail had been provided to enable Tyndall to analyse whether or not this was in line with the latest science.

Mr Sadler, Programme Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency stated that the draft city-wide Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 set out how the city as a whole needed to play its full part in tackling climate change, to ensure that Manchester stayed within its carbon budget of 15 MtCO₂. He described that this strategy had been informed by the current science on climate change. He stated that this overarching strategy for the city would have bespoke action plans sat beneath them for different organisations and sectors. He stated that whilst the need to respond to climate change was recognised by partner organisations, and a range of plans and actions had been implemented, the challenge now for the city was to significantly scale up this activity over the next five years. He stated that he welcomed the opportunity to hear the comments and feedback from Members on how the Agency could best work with the Committee and Members on climate change.

Mr Sadler, Programme Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency informed the Members that Manchester was represented at the Core Cities Network and European Networks, and would continue to do so. He described that this provided an opportunity to influence and learn from other cities on this important issue. Dr Jones, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research stated that Manchester was pioneering in regard to adopting a carbon budget for the city and other cities they were working with were looking to adopt a similar model. In regard to the issue of emissions from the aviation industry he stated that the current work being undertaken by the Tyndall Centre would develop recommendations on next steps, and likely to identify the next stage of work needed.

Mr Sadler, Programme Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency acknowledged the comment regarding the importance of engaging with young people on the issue of climate change and he made reference to the success of the Youth Climate Action Summit that had taken place 17 January 2020. He informed Members that the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board were seeking to appoint a Youth Climate

Action Champion and the Manchester Climate Change Partnership were seeking to appoint a schools' representative to join the Partnership.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer acknowledged the comment on the need for urgent action on this issue. She stated that a significant amount of work had already been implemented, including the delivery of the Civic Quarter Heat Network project and embedding low carbon and energy efficiency measures within the Council's annual maintenance programme and general estates management. In regard to funding, she described that climate change considerations were embedded into decisions and practices across the Council. She described that the Capital Strategy would focus more on prioritising investment in areas that would support delivery of the zero carbon ambitions. She said that the Council would continue to seek and lobby for additional external funding in order to escalate this activity, and to work with its partner organisations to assist with this work. She stated that consideration would be given as to how this activity could be reported.

In response to the question regarding the extraction of chemicals used in the production of LED lighting and batteries, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that a briefing note would be circulated to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships informed the Committee that Neighbourhoods Directorate were leading on the issue of climate change at a neighbourhood level for the Council, and Neighbourhood Team Officers underwent carbon literacy training during November and December 2019 and that the programme of training would continue to be rolled out, with 800 staff currently trained.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport stated that the government had failed to recognise or adequately understand the issue of climate change which was evidenced through the lack of appropriate funding and powers provided to local authorities to address this issue. She said the despite this, the Council recognising the importance of the issue and was committed to working in partnership and collaboratively with local partners to respond to the issue of climate change. She reiterated the importance of delivering improvements in emissions over the next five years. She further commented that everybody had responsibility to respond to the climate emergency.

Decisions

The Committee: -

1. Note the reports and thanked the representatives from the Manchester Climate Change Agency and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research for attending the meeting.
2. Recommend that the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 be amended to report targets in metrics of tonnes CO₂ to align with the decision to adopt a science based carbon budget and assist with measuring progress against this budget.

3. Recommend that the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport produce quarterly progress reports to report progress against the carbon budget target.

NESC/20/12 Planning Conditions and Enforcement

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Development that provided information requested relating to a number of planning related matters principally around the use and enforcement of planning conditions.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Information on planning conditions;
- The approach to enforcement action, including case studies;
- The monitoring of developments, including case studies;
- Data on the number of complaints investigated by the compliance team in the last 5 years;
- Conditions involving trees and open space, including case studies;
- Information on the number of complaints received specifically in relation to trees;
- Information on how the Planning Service worked with the Highway Authority and Social Providers; and
- A summary of the legal framework within which the planning system must operate.

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

- Information was sought in regard to who complaints, especially relating to construction should be directed to;
- Noting the low number of complaints relating to trees and commenting that these were relatively low;
- Further information was requested in relation to the work undertaken with housing providers and the importance of keeping local Members informed of developments;
- Consideration needed to be given to the impact of developments on residents and neighbourhoods, in particular the ability to deliver neighbourhood services such as bin collection; footpath closure and appropriate signage;
- Further information was sought on enforcement and the criteria applied to the public interest test;
- Did the city receive any compensation for road closures incurred as a result of private developments;
- What was the response to developers not complying with, or requesting removal of conditions, particularly in regarding to landscaping and green space;
- Members stated that information relating to planning being available in conservation areas, including providing information to local estate agents.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing acknowledged the comment regarding the surprisingly low number of complaints relating to trees and confirmed that these were accurate. She stated that the Planning Department worked with

social housing providers at all levels during development and acknowledged that dialogue with local Members had not always been consistent and this would be addressed.

In reference to the issue of construction, the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that many applications would require a Construction Management Plan that sought to mitigate disruption in the area. She advised that a virtual team was being established with officers from across a range of services, including the Highways Department to respond to any issues or complaints that may arise.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that an application to have a planning condition removed or varied would have to be submitted and due consideration given, however these applications were relatively low. She stated that if Members had specific concerns regarding conditions not being adhered to they should notify her and these would be investigated. She stated the local planning authority had powers to enforce breaches of planning control, adding that typically where formal notices were issued the compliance period is a minimum of 28 days, however each case would be considered to ensure the most appropriate and expedient action was taken to address any specific issue. In regard to the issue of the public interest test, the legal officer informed Members that there was no specific legal definition, however guidance relating to this was provided by the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that the local Neighbourhood Teams were proactive in local areas, including conservation areas and were a source of intelligence. She further informed Members that permission was currently being sought from the relevant Secretary of State to obtain legal powers to control the use of 'To Let' signs which were causing issues in parts of the city.

The Head of Network Management informed Members that the Council did not receive any payment by way of compensation when roads were closed when developments were being built. He described that the Highways Department worked with developers and contractors at pre application stage to understand and mitigate where possible the need for road closure, such as installing temporary traffic lights as an alternative to road closure and to ensure the sites and immediate area were safe. With reference to the comment regarding signage, he stated that this would always be asked for and if issues did arise officers would seek to address this.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport work together to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate the disruption to residents and services delivered in neighbourhoods that result from building construction.

NESC/20/13 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy - The Executive Member for Environment, Planning & Transport

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport that provided an overview of work undertaken, and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within the Executive Member's portfolio.

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

- Welcoming the reported repairs to over 40,000 highway defects, cleansing of over 100,000 gullies and around 7,000 drainage repairs undertaken;
- Requesting an update on the Public Cycle Hire Scheme;
- Was the work completed on the Manchester and Salford Inner relief route (Regent Road) as reported;
- Recognising the importance of climate change, all Executive Members needed to be explicit in how they would address this through their associated portfolio;
- Ward Plans needed to address climate change and support this activity; and
- Recognising the importance of promoting walking and cycling and the need to invest in schemes and improve footpath conditions and crossings.

With regard to the Public Cycle Hire Scheme, the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport responded by stating that Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) was currently tendering this scheme, building on lessons learnt and it was expected that the approved scheme would be launched later this year.

She reported that there was a snag list relating to the Manchester and Salford Inner relief route (Regent Road) works following completion of the major works that were currently being addressed by the contractor.

In respect of ward plans, the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport stated that some wards were further developed and detailed in relation to climate change and she would encourage Members to share good practice to build on this. She further confirmed that all Executive Members recognised the importance of climate change and did work together, across their remits to address this.

In regard to improving walking and cycling the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport acknowledged the importance of this. She stated that the city was committed to improving this and said that she was working with colleagues in TfGM to access the Greater Manchester Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund to support this. She further commented that the introduction and development of the Bee Network would further support alternative methods of transport and influence behaviour change. She stated that as this progressed local Members would be kept informed.

Decision

To note the report.

NESC/20/14 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy - The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

that provided an overview of work undertaken, and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within the Executive Member's portfolio.

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

- Recognising improvements in the number incidents of flytipping;
- Were officers working in Neighbourhood Teams engaged with the climate change agenda; and
- Welcoming improvement in recycling rates and how this could continue to improve.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that he regularly visited and met with staff working within Neighbourhood Teams and he confirmed that they were all passionate and committed to engaging and working with local communities to support climate change.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods further commented at least one of the grants available to each ward through the Neighbourhood Investment Funds each year should be used to deliver a climate change themed project.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods welcomed the comment from the Member who described that he had witnessed a reduction in flytipping, however stated this would continue to be closely monitored and action taken against any person responsible for this. In response to a request for further detail on how the additional investment had been used to address flytipping in the city, he referred Members to the waste report that had been considered by the Committee at their meeting of 9 October 2019 and the compliance and enforcement report submitted to the meeting of 4 December 2019.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods commented that improvements in recycling rates continued to improve and work to build in this this continued, noting that the introduction of new communal container bins should support this activity. He further commented that all planning application were required to provide an appropriate waste management plan. He further recognised the importance of engaging with schools and young people around the issues of climate change and recycling to influence long term behaviour change.

Decision

To note the report.

NESC/20/15 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.

A Member requested that both the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Licensing Committee be invited to attend the March meeting during consideration of the item on Taxi Licensing. The Scrutiny Support Officer confirmed that an invitation on behalf of the Committee would be sent.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and approves the work programme.