

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 9 February 2021

Subject: Petition for consideration by Scrutiny - Respond to climate change with more democracy and more money

Report of: The City Solicitor

Summary

This report provides an overview of a petition entitled “*Respond to climate change with more democracy and more money*” that has been submitted to the Council which requires consideration by Scrutiny in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme due to receiving over 1000 signatories of support.

The report also sets out the process that the Scrutiny Committee should follow in its consideration of the petition and issues that it may wish to take into account when considering the petition

Recommendations

The Committee, having had regard to the petition, is asked to consider:-

- i. Whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Council in regard to the establishment of a permanent Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee, of equal standing to the existing 6 scrutiny committees.
 - ii. Whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Council in regard to the use of Strategic Reserves in tackling climate change.
 - iii. Whether it wishes to make any recommendations to the Executive in regard to the proposed allocation of funding to tackle climate change as part of the Council’s 2021/22 budget setting process.
- or
- iv. Whether it wishes to make no recommendations to either Council or Executive in light of the financial pressures the Council is facing over the next financial year.
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Wards Affected:

All Wards

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Addressing the Council's Climate Emergency declaration is a core cross-cutting issue which is to be considered as a matter of course by all committees of the Council

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents

are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the petition that has been submitted to the Council which requires consideration by Scrutiny in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme due to receiving over 1000 signatories of support.
- 1.2 The report sets out the process that the Scrutiny Committee should follow in its consideration of the petition and sets out issues that need to be taken into account in determining whether it wishes to make any recommendations to the Executive and Full Council for further consideration.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 An online petition was submitted to the Council on 10 February 2020, via the Council's website, entitled "*Respond to climate change with more democracy and more money*". The petition asked the following of the Council:-

"We the undersigned petition the Council to Establish a permanent "Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee", of equal standing to the existing 6 scrutiny committees and Make strenuous efforts to secure additional funding for climate action, including the use of some of its strategic reserves."

- 2.2 The online petition closed on 10 November 2020 and received 771 signatories of support. In addition, the Petition organiser also submitted a physical petition to Council Offices containing a further 989 signatories of support. This totalled 1760 signatures.
- 2.3 In accordance the Council's petition scheme, any petition that receives over 1000 signatures will be eligible to be considered by one of the Council's scrutiny committees.

3.0 Process in consideration of a petition by Scrutiny

- 3.1 The petition organiser should be given 5 minutes to present their petition at the meeting.
- 3.2 The relevant council officer and/or Executive Member should then be given 5 minutes to outline the Council's response to the petition.
- 3.3 The committee should then discuss the petition for a maximum of 25 minutes, before making appropriate recommendations about how to respond to the petition.
- 3.4 Any deviation from this format will be at the discretion of the Committee.

4.0 Issues for consideration by the Committee

- 4.1 There are two aspects that the Petition asks of the Council that require consideration:-

1. *To establish a permanent “Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee”, of equal standing to the existing 6 scrutiny committees.*
2. *To make strenuous efforts to secure additional funding for climate action, including the use of some of its strategic reserves*

4.2 Establishment of a permanent “Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee

4.2.1 The establishment of any Committee is a function of full Council.

4.2.2 In establishing a 7th scrutiny committee, Members of the Committee may wish to take into consideration the following:-

- There would need to be additional staffing resource to provide the necessary support to a 7th scrutiny committee and any sub committees/task and finish groups it will be entitled to establish.
- This would mean the recruitment to an additional Scrutiny Support Officer post within the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit (Grade 6 - £26,511 - £29,577), although an assessment would need to be undertaken as to whether this would necessarily require being a full-time post;
- A 7th Scrutiny Committee would also require a 7th Scrutiny Chair who would be eligible for receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (currently £10,920 per annum).

4.2.3 If the Committee is minded to support this request, it would need to make a recommendation to full Council.

4.3 The use of the Council’s strategic reserves

4.3.1 Like all local authorities Manchester City Council has been severely impacted by Covid-19 and is having to deliver a significant programme of cuts for 2021/22. By April 2025 the amount of earmarked reserves will have reduced from £349m to £95m with the remaining balance including Insurance fund and Reserves held to support capital schemes. However, the commitment to achieving our zero carbon commitments remains. A full report on progress to date and priorities for next year is going to the February meeting of Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny.

4.3.2 The use of the Council’s strategic reserves is a function of full Council. Again, if the Committee is minded to support this request, it would need to make a recommendation to Council.

4.3.3 The Committee, if minded to however, could recommend to the Executive that it reconsiders the proposed allocation of funding to tackle climate change as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

4.4 **How Scrutiny is currently reviewing the Climate Emergency**

4.4.1 Addressing the Climate Emergency and the Council's zero carbon target is a core cross-cutting issue that is to be considered as a matter of course by all Scrutiny Committees of the Council.

4.4.2 Following the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in July 2019, the Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny Committee established a Climate Emergency Subgroup in September 2019. The objectives and key lines of enquiry of the Sub Group are:-

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.
- 4.4.3 The Subgroup met in October 2019, January 2020 and was scheduled to meet in March 2020 due to the impact of the COVID pandemic was not able to. No further meetings of any Scrutiny Subgroups have taken place since March 2020.
- 4.4.4 Whilst it is recognised that for the past 10 months, the Council's focus has predominantly been concerned with tackling the impact of the COVID19 pandemic to the Council, the city's economy and its residents (and subsequent recovery), the Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny Committee has scheduled the following substantive item of business for consideration at its meeting on 10 February 2021:-

Climate Change Action Plan Update	To receive a report that outlines the progress made to date against the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. This will provide details of progress made and actions taken since this was last reported to the Committee. The report will further include details of the progress to deliver on the specific actions as prescribed within the motion that was adopted in July 2019 when the Council declared a climate emergency.
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- 4.4.5 In addition, it is worth noting that in November 2019, the Economy Scrutiny Committee allocated a full meeting to consider the opportunities and challenges faced by Manchester in delivering a Green Economy for the City's economic growth and development in the context of the Local Industrial Strategy and the ambition as a City and region to be carbon neutral by 2038. The meeting looked at how the adoption of a zero carbon strategy could generate growth and improvements in people's lives in ways consistent with sustaining and advancing economic, environmental and social well-being.
- 4.4.6 It is also worth noting that addressing climate change is a key part of the part of the City's Economic Recovery Plan, various aspects of which will be scrutinised by a number of the existing Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.5 The Committee may want to consider whether it would be appropriate for just one Scrutiny Committee to have the responsibility for the oversight of ensuring the Council acts upon its Climate Emergency Declaration in tackling climate change.
- 5.0 Recommendations**
- 5.1 The recommendations are set out at the front of the report.