

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021

Present:

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Flanagan, Foley, Hassan, Holt, Hughes, Jeavons, Lynch, Lyons, Razaq, Sadler, Shilton Godwin and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Jeavons

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment

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

ECCSC/21/09 Minute Silence For The Victims Of Recent Environmental Disasters

The Committee and all those present observed a minute's silence in remembrance of all those who had lost lives as a result of the extreme weather events witnessed recently across the globe.

ECCSC/21/10 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 as a correct record.

ECCSC/21/11 Climate Change Action Plan Quarterly Progress Report: Q1 April - June 2021

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update on the progress that had been made in delivering the Plan over the last 3 months (April – June 2021), noting that Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and developed a Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25, which was approved by Executive in March 2020.

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

- Recognising the significant progress made to date to reduce carbon emissions;
- Requesting that reports to the Committee that were publicly available on the website should include bar charts to track emissions against the carbon budget;
- All RAG ratings needed to include figures, targets and comparative data where available.
- Consideration needed to be given as to how the impact of actions were assessed and reported;
- Noting that research undertaken by the Local Government Association had described that Councils had significant wider influence to reduce emissions, in

- addition to those that they were directly responsible for;
- Information that was published on the website needed to be clear and accessible
- Information was sought on available and future funding sources to progress this work, in particular the retrofitting of homes;
- An update was sought on the recruitment to posts within the Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA);
- Noting the levels of occupancy within the Private Rented Sector (PRS) it was important that private landlords improved their housing stock to reduce carbon emissions;
- All new housing developments should include solar panels;
- The need to capture the impact of COVID within the plan, noting the new ways of working and people's travel arrangements, adding the need to recognise the impact on emissions as a result of working from home;
- Were the emissions savings achieved through the buildings estate a result of COVID and the new ways of working and was this sustainable long term;
- Noting that the University had developed a Place Based Carbon Calculator;
- Noting that the report was honest and transparent and had included a discussion on the Risks and Issues identified;
- Noting the challenges and barriers experienced by different groups across this city it was important to ensure that engagement with residents on the issue of climate change needed to be appropriate;
- Clarification was sought as to the reasons for the reported air travel;
- An update was sought on the calls for the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) to divest from investing in fossil fuels;
- Carbon Literacy training needed to be delivered in schools, including those schools cross borders that children attended, adding that the voice of young people and schools should be included in the development of climate change ward action plans; and
- The need to ensure that the correct species of trees be planted in locations such as near schools and on road routes so as to maximise their carbon capture.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships updated the Members in regard to the recruitment to posts within the MCCA by advising that the Director will be starting 1 October 2021 and the recruitment to the post of Deputy Director was about to commence. In addition, the Policy and Strategy Lead would be starting 20 September 2021, the Programme and Finance Officer was currently in post as was the Residents and Communities Lead. He advised that all of these posts were funded by Manchester City Council. In addition, the post of Youth Champion had been appointed funded by crowd funding and the Adaptation and Resilience Officer was also in post via a secondment from Manchester Metropolitan University. He further informed the Committee that there were five other roles identified on the MCCA structure but filling these would be dependent on funding from other members of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership.

In response to the issue of funding, the Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships commented that the pipeline of projects described within the plan helped to inform and articulate all funding opportunities. He stated that work had been undertaken to understand the projected figures to deliver retrofitting works and this evidence would

be submitted as part of the ask of the government's spending review. He commented that carbon reduction also informed the Economic Recovery Plan for the city. The Zero Carbon Manager acknowledged the comments regarding the reporting of data, adding that the emissions against carbon budget was produced in the annual report as there were challenges regarding the frequency and verification of data reporting and the risk of double counting when reporting. The Committee were informed that the issue regarding the RAG ratings would be discussed further at the Zero Carbon Coordination Group.

The Zero Carbon Manager further commented that a project was currently underway to review the information that was available to the public on the Council's website so that in addition to the more formal reporting, a narrative would also be provided to describe the progress achieved to date.

The Zero Carbon Manager advised that the learning from the pandemic would be adopted and she made reference to the staff travel policy that was currently being drafted.

Noting the comments regarding the need to engage with private landlords on the issue of carbon emissions, the Zero Carbon Manager described that this was recognised as a significant area and that a programme was underway at a Greater Manchester level to consider the issue of retrofitting across all types of tenure. She stated that in addition to tackling the issue of carbon emissions this work would also contribute to other important issues such as fuel poverty, health and skills and employment.

The Executive Member for Environment informed the Committee that she would be discussing the issue of PRS with the Executive Member for Housing and Employment with the ambition to progressing this important area of work. In regard to the issue of tree planting and the choice of species she advised that this was scheduled to be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, however she would speak with the Member outside of the meeting regarding the specific scheme in her ward.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships stated that Northwards Housing would be considering all retrofitting options, including alternative heat sources and solar panels as part of their wider capital investment programme and scheduled improvement works. He further added that resident behavior change and adaption to new technology was important to ensure that maximum benefits from new technology could be realised.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships commented that he was aware of the Place Based Carbon Calculator that had been developed by the University and consideration would be given as to how this tool could be utilised to help deliver and inform the programme of activities described across the Action Plan.

The Head of Neighbourhoods described that the Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers would assist Neighbourhood Teams to develop individual Climate Change Ward Action Plans, noting that work to quantify and report the outcomes of these plans was to be developed with the local University. She acknowledged the comment from the Member regarding the need to use appropriate language and engagement with different communities adding that this was understood.

In response to the question relating to air travel, the Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships clarified that these flights had been purchased to facilitate the repatriation of Looked After Children, adding that as these had been purchased by the Local Authority and in the spirit of openness and transparency it was important to report this.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships further acknowledged the comments regarding young people and schools noting the importance of this, in particular in the context of the Year of the Child.

In regard to the issue of the GMPF the Executive Member for Environment stated that she shared the Committee's frustration and like her predecessor she would continue to lobby them to disinvest from fossil fuels. Members recommended that the Chair of this Committee should also write to the GMPF to urge them to disinvest immediately and support the city's ambition to transition to a zero carbon city.

The Chair concluded this item of business by congratulating all involved on the progress to date. She informed the Committee that she would be speaking with the Executive Member for Environment and the Head of Planning to scope the content of the report scheduled for the September meeting on the issue of planning to ensure that the themes and topics raised at this meeting were adequately addressed. She further stated that following the discussion she would be meeting with the other Scrutiny Chairs to ensure the issue of climate change was addressed through the remits of their respective Committees.

Decisions

The Committee recommend;

1. That every school on a main arterial route with high traffic have a tree planting plan included as part of the tree strategy to promote clean air;
2. That every council employee and Councillor make a pledge to support climate change; and
3. That all ward climate change plans across the city include a priority action to reduce carbon emissions and promote clean air, including but not restricted to no idling campaigns outside schools, developing walk to school schemes, road closures and the promotion of playing out schemes.
4. That the Chair write to the GMPF to urge them to disinvest from fossil fuels immediately and support the city's ambition to transition to a zero carbon city.

ECCSC/21/12 Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and City Solicitor that set out the proposed Greater Manchester Final Clean Air Plan and policy following a review of all the information gathered through the GM CAP consultation and wider data, evidence and modelling work which was to be agreed by the ten Greater Manchester local authorities.

The Committee were invited to comment on the report prior to its consideration by the Executive at their meeting of 28 July 2021.

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

- Noting that the Clean Air Plan would primarily address the issue of Nitrogen Dioxide would this plan contribute to the lowering of Carbon Dioxide emissions;
- Expressing disappointment that the Strategic Road Network did not include the M60 motorway;
- A member called for a suspension of road building, similar to that which had recently been announced in Wales;
- Good practice and scrappage schemes, with reference to a scheme delivered in Coventry should be used to incentivise drivers to change to more environmentally friendly vehicles;
- The Council needed to be clear in its ambition to see a reduced dependency on cars to undertake journeys, in particular unnecessary short journeys, commenting that the Council remained committed to this;
- Questioning the space allocated to staff car parking at schools that had been recently built across the city, commenting that this was contrary to the ambitions of the city as it did not set a good example to both pupils attending the school and their parents, and it further contributed to the issue of water run off;
- The Council should use all levers of influence to encourage all employers across the city to develop sustainable staff travel plans;
- Consideration needed to be given to addressing the emissions caused by diesel freight trains; and
- An update was sought as to the introduction of electric buses across the city, noting that this has been piloted in the city.

In response to the questions from the Members, the Head of Environment, Planning and Infrastructure advised that the Clean Air Plan was part of a wider suite of strategies and planned projects designed to contribute to reducing the city's carbon emissions, making reference to the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy, the City Centre Transport Strategy, reference to the significant investment to deliver public transport and active travel projects and the work across Greater Manchester to deliver electric vehicle charging points.

With regard to the comments raised regarding the schools, the Head of Environment, Planning and Infrastructure commented that he would look into the specific cases raised following the meeting. He added that the delivery of Mobility Hubs across Greater Manchester would encourage and support public and active travel, noting that work was underway to strategically place these sites. He commented that this would support the ambition to reduce the number of journeys undertaken by car.

In response to the discussion on diesel freight trains, the Head of Environment, Planning and Infrastructure stated that the Government had recently released its transport decarbonisation plan; however, he would need to research the specifics in relation to diesel trains and feed back to the Member.

The Head of Logistics and Environment, Transport for Greater Manchester referred to the issue of electric buses by stating that the pilot scheme referred to had been funded by central government and that subsequently a bid had been submitted to fund the delivery of electric vehicles for the whole of the bus fleet, adding that funding was available and already being delivered through the Clean Air Plan to retrofit the existing fleet if required.

Decisions

The Committee endorse the recommendations that the Executive;

1. Note the progress of the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan;
2. Note the progress in the distribution of Bus Retrofit funding;
3. Note Ministers' agreement to include the sections of the A628/A57 in Tameside which form part of the Strategic Road Network within the Greater Manchester's Clean Air Zone (CAZ) and their request for Tameside MBC, TfGM and Highways England to establish the most appropriate solution for the charging mechanism to be applied on this section of the Strategic Road Network (SRN);
4. Approve the GM Clean Air Plan Policy, at Appendix 1 noting that the policy outlines the boundary, discounts, exemptions, daily charges of the Clean Air Zone as well as the financial support packages offered towards upgrading to a compliant vehicle, including the eligibility criteria to be applied.
5. Note the Equalities Impact Assessment, as set out at Appendix 2;
6. Note the AECOM Consultation Report, as set out at Appendix 3;
7. Agree the proposed Response to the Consultation at Appendix 4 which has been prepared by TfGM on behalf of the ten GM local authorities;
8. Note the Impacts of COVID-19 Report, as set out at Appendix 5;
9. Agree the Modelling report of the final CAP package, as set out at Appendix 6, and in particular that the modelling outputs of the final plan scheme show the achievement of compliance with the legal limits for Nitrogen Dioxide in the shortest possible time and by 2024 at the latest as required by the Ministerial Direction;
10. Note the economic implications of the CAP Report, as set out at Appendix 7;
11. Note the update on the GM Minimum Licensing Standards, set out in section 3.1, and in particular that licensing conditions will not be used to support delivery of the GM Clean Air Plan;

12. Approve a 6-week public consultation on the inclusion of motorhomes classified as MSP1 in the GM Clean Air Zone and on the inclusion of the A575 and A580 at Worsley commencing on 1 September 2021 and delegate authority to the Executive Member for Environment to approve the consultation materials;
13. Note that the GM Clean Air Charging Authorities Committee has the authority to make the Charging Scheme Order which establishes the GM Charging Scheme in line with the agreed GM Clean Air Plan Policy;
14. Note that the GM Charging Authorities Committee has the authority to vary the Charging Scheme Order if this is established as the most appropriate charging mechanism to be applied on sections of the A628/A57 part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in Tameside;
15. Note that the Air Quality Administration Committee has the authority to agree the final form of the Operational Agreement for the Central Clean Air Service, and to authorise the making of the Agreement, on behalf of the ten GM local authorities;
16. Note that the Air Quality Administration Committee has the authority to:
 - a. establish and distribute the funds set out in the agreed GM Clean Air Plan policy;
 - b. approve the assessment mechanism agreed with JAQU to ensure that Clean Air Funds can be adapted if necessary;
 - c. keep the use of the funds under review and to determine any changes in the amounts allocated to each and their use; and
 - d. monitor and evaluate the joint local charging scheme.
17. Approve the reallocation of funding from the Try Before You Buy scheme to provide additional electric vehicle charging points dedicated for use by taxis;
18. Delegate to the GM Charging Authorities Committee the authority to determine the outcome of the consultation on both the inclusion of motorhomes classified as MSP1 within the scope of Clean Air Zone charges and on the inclusion in the GM Clean Air Zone of the A575 and A580 at Worsley following the conclusion of that consultation;
19. Approve the Clean Air Zone ANPR and signage locations, as set out at Appendix 10; and
20. Agree a delegation to Deputy Chief Executive to approve the submission of the Interim Full Business Case if required and Executive Member for Environment the Full Business Case (FBC) to the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit to support the GM Clean Air Plan and any supplementary information to that Unit.

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 a report on the issue of flood management be submitted to the Committee for consideration and that representatives from the Environment Agency would be invited to attend that meeting. The Chair advised that she would look to schedule this on the Committee's Work Programme at the earliest opportunity.

Decision

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme subject to the above comments.