

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021

Present:

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

Councillors Foley, Hassan, Holt, Jeavons, Razaq, Sadler, Shilton Godwin and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Chohan, Flanagan, Hughes, Lynch and Lyons

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment

Tom Flanagan, Interim Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

Simon Curtis, Chair, Manchester Arts and Sustainability Team

ECCSC/21/14 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021 as a correct record.

ECCSC/21/15 Climate Change Action Plan Annual Report 2020-21 and Work Programme 2021-22

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update on the progress that had been made in delivering the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) during the first full financial year (CCAP Annual Report 2020-21) and the work programme for the second financial year of the Action Plan (CCAP Work Programme 2021-22).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- A five-year CCAP covering 2020-25 was approved at Executive in March 2020;
- Updates had been considered by Strategic Management Team and the former Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee throughout the CCAP's first year, with a detailed progress report considered in February 2021;
- This Annual Report brought together the CCAP updates provided over the last 12 months, a full year of CO₂ emissions data and highlighted the progress which had been made during this time;
- Overall, the Council's direct emissions had reduced by 21% (-6,783 tonnes CO₂) compared to 2019-20 and against an annual target to reduce emissions by 13%. For 2021-22, the Council's carbon budget was 27,056 tonnes CO₂, 13% lower than for 2020-21;
- The Work Programme for 2021-22, outlined the key CCAP actions, or critical milestones within complex CCAP actions spanning multiple years, which were to be delivered during this period and these were listed under the five themes (Buildings & Energy, Transport & Travel, Reducing consumption based emissions, Climate adaptation, and Catalysing change); and

- The work programme took account of a small number of actions that were delayed last year due to the pandemic and incorporated milestones for new projects, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the 'In Our Nature' communities programme. None of these projects had featured in the original CCAP 2020-25.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to it being considered by Executive.

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

- The need to reiterate the urgency and immediacy of the climate emergency;
- Questioning that if we accepted that climate change was such an important and immediate issue why were some targets listed as still 'to be confirmed' in relation to projected CO2 emissions reductions;
- An update was sought on the Local Authority Green Homes Grant;
- Questioning the capacity and ability of the Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA) to lead and deliver on such an important issue for the city;
- Commenting that the Council contained the capacity and leadership to deliver the ambitions of the MCCA;
- More information was sought on the task-and-finish sub-group that had been convened to ensure the new organisational and governance structures of the MCCA were fit for purpose;
- Noting that the Council's own emissions had reduced more than the minimum target and that it was important to continue on this trajectory and all levers should be used to influence partners and organisations across the city to address their own carbon emissions;
- More needed to be done to improve and deliver green public transport; active travel and measures to address the emissions from domestic properties across all tenures;
- Consideration needed to be given to creating a local bank/bond scheme to support green investments;
- An explanation was sought as to the reported spike in emissions in 2015 attributed to Biffa;
- An update on the sustainable travel policy for Officers and Members was requested;
- An update on the activities to address emissions associated with aviation was requested;
- More information was requested on the Manchester Food Board;
- Would Manchester be represented at COP26, the international meeting to discuss global action on climate change;
- Could the Civic Quarter Heat Network supply domestic properties;
- How were the emissions generated from Northwards properties accounted for now that these had been brought back in house;

The Strategic Lead - Policy and Partnerships informed Members that the spike in emissions attributed to Biffa in 2015 was as a result of the change in the contract at that time which moved street sweeper vehicles from the Council's fleet to Biffa and was mirrored by a decrease in emissions in MCC's operational fleet at the same time.

He further commented that the impact of the new electric refuse collection vehicles within the fleet were yet to be realised but would be captured and reported.

The Strategic Lead - Policy and Partnerships noted the comment from the Committee regarding the need to continue with the trajectory of reducing the Council's emissions. He said this was understood and in response to the question regarding the targets that were listed as 'to be confirmed', he stated that this only applied to those projects where CO2 savings could not currently be quantified. He further confirmed that the sustainable travel policy for Officers and Members was still being progressed and updates would be provided at the appropriate time. In response to the question regarding aviation emissions he advised that the Committee would be receiving a substantive report on this item at the December meeting.

The Strategic Lead - Policy and Partnerships acknowledged the challenge and scale of retrofitting domestic properties, however modelling work had been undertaken across Greater Manchester (GM) and that evidence would inform the submission to central government as part of the Spending Review Submission. He further acknowledged the suggestion regarding the bond scheme and stated this would be taken away for consideration.

The Strategic Lead - Policy and Partnerships stated that the Climate Change Action Plan was designed to be clear and transparent, and he assured Members that the Zero Carbon Co-ordination Group met monthly to review the plan. He added that this would include discussions on the best way of reporting emissions from Northwards and their properties. He stated that it was important to have a pipeline of projects scheduled to continue to deliver the reduction in emissions. With reference to the question related to the Civic Quarter Heat Network he confirmed that this was not available to domestic properties, however the Zero Carbon Manager advised that work was underway at a GM level to consider the options to address domestic energy supply, adding that currently the production and supply of hydrogen is not sufficient to support large scale adoption of hydrogen boilers for domestic properties. In response to the discussion on the provision of energy she suggested that a report on the Local Energy Area Plan developed by the Energy Systems Catapult could be provided to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

The Strategic Lead - Policy and Partnerships stated that Manchester was working in collaboration with the other Core Cities to ensure there was a presence at COP26. He advised that a piece of work was underway to better articulate and communicate the Council's actions on climate change and that this would be included in the Council's website ahead of COP26.

The Executive Member for Environment referred to the Green Homes Grant and noted that lessons would be learnt to improve the take up rate of any future grant schemes. She said that a strategy would be developed with the Communications Team to ensure the correct message were directed at residents to maximise the take up.

The Executive Member for Environment stated that ongoing impact of austerity and budget cuts and the subsequent impact on Council staff numbers meant that the Council did not have the capacity to deliver the work and ambitions of the MCCA.

She stated that the benefits of a partnership model was demonstrated by the bringing together of a wealth of knowledge and resources across the city.

The Chair informed the Committee that a report on Food Sustainability would be scheduled for the Committee's January 2022 meeting and this would include information on the Manchester Food Board.

Decisions

The Committee:-

1. Endorse the recommendation that the Executive note the contents of the report, the progress that has been made in delivering the Action Plan during the first year (CCAP Annual Report 2020-21) and the work programme for the second year of the Action Plan (CCAP Work Programme 2021-22).
2. Agree that the Chair convenes a meeting with the Executive Member for Environment to discuss the concerns raised by Members regarding the Manchester Climate Change Agency.
3. Recommend that a report on the options to be considered relating to the provision of energy for domestic properties is included on the Committee's Work Programme.

ECCSC/21/16 Manchester Climate Change Agency Progress Report 2021/22

The Committee considered a joint report and presentation of the Interim Director and the Interim Policy and Strategy Advisor, Manchester Climate Change Agency that provided a progress update to the Committee on the Climate Change Agency's achievements to date during the year and reviewed work in progress.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing reasons for delaying publication of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership's Annual Report until September;
- Describing the context of the Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 and its four headline objectives and the six priority areas for action;
- A narrative that described Partnership and Agency Progress 2021/22;
- Citywide Progress 2020/21, including aviation;
- Describing the rationale for developing Version 2.0 of the Framework for 2020-25, noting that Manchester was one of the first cities to adopt science-based carbon budgeting; and
- An update on National Policy and Local & National Government Joint-working.

The Committee also received a presentation from Simon Curtis, Chair, Manchester Arts and Sustainability Team that discussed the relationship between the arts and culture and climate change and how culture could engage with citizens on this issue to influence change.

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

- Action needed to be taken to reduce the demand on aviation, adding that technology alone was not the solution to reducing emissions from the aviation industry;
- The need for the Council to take the moral lead on the issue so as to inspire and influence change;
- Noting the importance and impact of Carbon Literacy Training, and that this should be delivered to all residents;
- Everyone needed to take responsibility for their own emissions, in particular in regard to the issue of consumption, especially in relation to clothing;
- A list of all organisations in Manchester of those that had signed up to the MCCA and a list of all those that had not, and where available the reasons for not signing up to be provided;
- Consideration needed to be given as to how targets and outcomes were reported, adding that this should be similar to the format of the Manchester Climate Change Action Plan;
- A report was required that evaluated whether the City Council was achieving value for money for its investment into the MCCA;
- Recognising the need to increase capacity within MCCA to influence and deliver this programme;
- The impact of poverty and emissions, noting that economically disadvantaged residents often did not own a vehicle or take flights; and
- Did the MCCA lobby the Government for funding to deliver schemes such as solar panels for schools and hospitals.

The Interim Director MCCA stated that it was important to recognise that the MCCA was not responsible for the targets but rather a body to coordinate all action plans of partners across the city. He reiterated the point that it was the responsibility of every organisation and individual to consider and take action to address their carbon emissions.

The Interim Director MCCA advised that MCCA did work with other cities to consider challenges at scale, such as the issue of aviation emissions as this provided an opportunity to share knowledge and best practice. He further acknowledged the comment regarding consumption and stated that it was an opportunity for organisations to challenge themselves through their own procurement process and supply chains. With reference to the list of organisations requested he stated that this could be provided following the meeting.

The Interim Director MCCA further advised that they did work with other Core Cities to lobby the Government for additional resources to fund initiatives and projects to reduce carbon emissions.

The Chair commented that she noted the Members comments regarding the format of the reports submitted by MCCA to the Committee, including the delivery of presentations at meetings. She said she would liaise with the Executive Member to discuss this further.

The Executive Member for Environment stated she acknowledged the comments regarding Carbon Literacy Training and said that there were good examples of how this could be delivered locally, and she would share good practice with Members for them to consider how this could be applied to their respective wards.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/21/17 Planning and Its Contribution To Address Climate Change

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that described how the planning policy and process was used to influence and address climate change, including an update on the Local Plan, describing the policy in relation to developer requirements to provide electric vehicle charging points and cycle storage facilities, and the approach to Environmental Impact Assessments.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing a background and overview of the planning policy framework, including the Core Strategy.
- An update on the Local Plan and the opportunities of the Local Plan refresh;
- The policy in relation to developer requirements to provide electric vehicle charging points and cycle storage facilities;
- The approach to Environmental Impact Assessments; and
- Conclusion and next steps.

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

- Planning policy and decisions were a significant lever at the disposal of the Council and should be used to maximise environmental improvements and address carbon emissions;
- Nothing in the city should be built that adversely affects the environment;
- All developments should support active travel by providing bike storage space and support the Council's ambition to reduce reliance on cars;
- Construction Management Plans should also be used to maximise environmental benefits, including the impact on noise pollution;
- Could Energy Reduction Targets be imposed following the completion of a development;
- There was no reference within the report to protecting existing bio diversity;
- Permitted development on domestic buildings needed to be monitored to ensure they were not adding to emissions; and
- Consideration needed to be given to addressing urban heat islands that occurred when cities replaced natural land cover with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorbed and retained heat.

The Head of Environment, Planning and Infrastructure informed the Committee that the Local Plan was one of a suite of strategies and he made reference to the Green

and Blue Strategy and the policies at both a Manchester level and GM level to address issues relating to transport and active travel.

The Planning Section Manager advised that the Environmental Impact Assessment considers a range of issues including the energy efficiency of the development, bio diversity, tree planting, drainage and highways. He commented that all applications were assessed and considered using existing national guidance and local policy and developers were always challenged to increase their contribution to reducing the developments' environmental impact, particularly in relation as to how they sourced their materials.

In response to the comments made regarding the monitoring of Construction Management Plans, the Planning Section Manager advised that if issues did occur there were a range of teams within the Council who would respond to these, and where necessary take enforcement action. He said that if a Construction Management Plan was not available at the application stage due to a contractor not being identified this would be stipulated as a condition of any consent granted.

The Planning Section Manager noted the comment made regarding permitted developments and stated that planning permission was not required for these, which in effect reduced the control the planning department had on such projects.

In response to the comment made regarding Heat Islands, the Planning and Infrastructure Manager advised that a piece of bespoke work had been commissioned to consider the open space across the city which would support work on the Local Plan refresh.

The Chair stated that every opportunity should be taken to increase green spaces and planting in the city so as to support and encourage bio diversity. She further suggested that a point of contact should be created so that developers could obtain advice on the type of tree and the best locations they should be planting them so as to maximise their impact.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/21/18 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 note the report and agree the work programme.