

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022

Present:

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair
Councillors Chohan, Flanagan, Foley, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Lyons, Sheikh, Shilton Godwin and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Holt and Lynch

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment
Samantha Nicholson, Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

ECCSC/22/06 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022 as a correct record.

ECCSC/22/07 Neighbourhood Directorate Budget 2022/23

Further to minute (ECCSC/21/27) the Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a further update on the saving proposals being proposed as part of the 2022/23 budget process.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Following the Spending Review announcements and provisional local government finance settlement 2022/23 the Council was forecasting a balanced budget for 2022/23, a gap of £37m in 2023/24 and £58m by 2024/25;
- The settlement was for one year only and considerable uncertainty remained from 2023/24;
- A longer-term strategy to close the budget gap was being prepared with an estimated requirement to find budget cuts and savings in the region of £60m over the next three years;
- £30m of risk-based reserves had been identified as available to manage risk and timing differences;
- An overview of the headline priorities for the service;
- A description of the Neighbourhoods Revenue Budget Strategy;
- A description of the Capital budget and pipeline priorities; and
- A description of the Climate Change Priorities and Investment.

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

- Noting that the Government had failed to adequately fund the Council and they needed to be held to account;

- Supporting the reported Climate Change Priorities and Investment;
- Whilst recognising the varied work and initiatives delivered by officers to tackle climate change and support communities, more needed to be done to publicise this work and communicate this positive work with both residents and Members;
- The need to improve air quality across the city, making reference to those issues caused as a result of poor traffic flow and cars idling;
- The continued call for the Council to act as a catalyst and influencer to escalate the activities and actions needed to address climate change;
- The need to scrutinise the cost effectiveness of the Council's financial contribution to the Manchester Climate Change Agency; and
- Calling for the continued, long term funding of the Climate Change Officer posts.

In response to questions, officers clarified the capital spend reporting that had been presented, the rating of Carbon Literacy training, adding that this training was now mandatory for all staff and information relating to the Cargo Bikes referenced within the report.

In considering the budget proposals, a Member recommended an amendment. He recommended that a Capital Budget of £1m be established for the Executive Member for Environment, with this budget specifically used to support work and initiatives to tackle air pollution across the city. He recommended that this budget could be funded by levying a Section 106 charge of £1000 for all new build homes for sale in Manchester (excluding social housing and a reduced charge for affordable housing).

This recommendation was supported by the Committee.

A further recommendation was proposed that funding be provided to permanently fund the Climate Change Officer posts. This recommendation was supported by the Committee.

Decisions

The Committee recommend that the Executive;

1. Establish a Capital Budget of £1m for the Executive Member for Environment, with this budget specifically used to support work and initiatives to tackle air pollution across the city. This budget could be funded by levying a Section 106 charge of £1000 for all new build homes for sale in Manchester (excluding social housing and a reduced charge for affordable housing).
2. That funding be provided to permanently fund the Climate Change Officer posts.

ECCSC/22/08 Refresh of Manchester's Climate Change Framework 2020-25

The Committee considered the report of the Manchester Climate Change Agency and Partnership that provided a progress update on the refresh of Manchester's Climate Change Framework 2020-2025.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing that the Framework refresh was to establish more detailed and quantified data around the actions the city needed to take to reduce its direct, energy related emissions and stay within its carbon budgets;
- The work to better understand and address indirect emissions;
- The Framework would also include an update on research to move the city forwards on climate adaptation and resilience;
- The recent research on the intersection between addressing health inequalities and climate action;
- The consultation process; and
- Next steps, noting that the refreshed Framework was expected to be completed in the first quarter of the new financial year (April-June 2022) and launched in quarter two (July-Sept 2022).

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

- The need for Councillors to effectively scrutinise the work and outcomes of the Manchester Climate Change Agency and Partnership;
- How were the progress against the carbon emissions targets and carbon budget for the city reported;
- The need to reiterate the urgency of the climate emergency;
- The need to communicate with residents the scale of the challenge and the need for immediate action;
- Noting the scale of the challenge to adequately insulate homes across Greater Manchester and the need for the government to fund this, particularly in the context of increasing fuel and energy prices;
- The need to include consideration of carbon emissions from transport and not restrict consideration of this subject area to Nitrogen Dioxide (No2) emissions; and
- The need to galvanise and progress actions across the city at speed and scale to mitigate the impending climate disaster, using all levers and influence available to the Council.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency informed the Committee that the progress against the city's carbon budget was reported annually via the annual report that is produced and presented to the Committee. She advised that it would not be possible to produce a meaningful quarterly update due to the complexity of the data reporting and the lags in the data release from a number of sources. She described that the refresh of Manchester's Climate Change Framework 2020-2025 would articulate the scale of the challenge and establish actions against the targets.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency agreed with the comment regarding the importance of communicating with all residents the need to take immediate responsibility and actions to address carbon emissions. She advised that it was important to recognise that people would have a range of different motivations to implement personal behavioural change, so there was not a 'one size fits all' approach to achieve this. She described that they did have a Community

Engagement Programme that was designed to work with and support different community groups on a range of climate change projects. She further made reference to the work of the Youth Board as means of strengthening engagement and communications.

The Executive Member for Environment commented that she noted the comments regarding carbon and transport emissions and advised that a briefing note to Members would be provided following the meeting that described the plans and actions to address this.

The Chair concluded this item of business by paying tribute to all staff working to address climate change. She stated that she recognised the scale of the challenge and the capacity within the Climate Change Agency and Partnership, noting an international global response was required. She further called upon the Government to adequately fund activities to tackle climate change, noting that the larger polluters in the country needed to be prioritised.

The Chair further paid tribute to the Members of the Committee for their continued engagement and scrutiny of the climate agenda, noting that they articulated the voice of residents across the city on this important issue. She commented that the scrutiny process had helped inform and shape the Council's response to addressing carbon emissions and would continue to contribute to the city to becoming zero-carbon by 2038 at the latest.

Decision

The Committee note the report.

ECCSC/22/09 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.

Decisions

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme.