

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2022

Present:

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Flanagan, Foley, Hassan, Holt, Hughes, Sheikh, Shilton Godwin and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Good, Jeavons and Lyons

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment

ECCSC/22/10 Minutes

In considering the minutes of the previous meeting the Committee noted that as part of the Council's budget setting it had been agreed to permanently fund the Climate Change Officer posts.

A Member informed the Committee that the funding for the Climate Change Youth Board would be ending and she called for the continued funding of this Board.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 as a correct record.

ECCSC/22/11 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan, including annual update and a report on the Tree Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that provided the annual update on the delivery of the Green and Blue Implementation Plan together with information on the delivery of the Tree Action Plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Describing the relationship of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy to other Council strategies and action plans;
- The objectives and long-term vision of the Strategy;
- Governance arrangements and G&BI stakeholder Group;
- The contribution the strategy had in relation to the Climate Emergency and Social Inclusion and Equality;
- An overview of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan refresh;
- Describing the Greater Manchester IGNITION Project and the GrowGreen Project;
- The G&BI Implementation Plan 2021 Delivery highlights by Objective; and

- The G&BI Implementation Plan Refresh and Future Priorities.

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

- Welcoming the clear and detailed report and requesting that an easy read version was produced to ensure this was accessible to all residents;
- Welcoming the inclusion of 'Objective Three: Improving access and connectivity for people and wildlife, focusing on: Green routes – neighbourhoods and travel routes';
- Noting that trees planted in residential streets had caused damage to the pavements as the roots had grown, and consideration needed to be given to using the planting technique adopted in Albert Square to reduce this damage;
- An exercise should be undertaken to understand residents' access to green space, calling for equity of access to quality green space for all residents;
- Equitable access to quality green space needed to be considered in conjunction with active travel schemes;
- Welcoming the inclusion of the Bee Line information that was included within report;
- Recognising that planning policies and developments were key to the delivery of quality green space;
- Priority should be given to delivering green schemes in those wards that had historically not benefited from such schemes, adding that officers should support residents and interested community groups to bid for all available funding to deliver green schemes;
- Noting that the recent IPCC report stressed the importance and urgency to address climate change;
- The need to engage local schools on the issue of green and blue space, as part of the wider issue of climate change to influence behaviour change;
- A strategy was required to ensure that all Registered Housing Providers across the city took responsibility for managing the green spaces they were responsible for, noting that the approach adopted was currently inconsistent across the city;
- Consideration needed to be given to promoting the benefits of grass verges as a way of supporting bio diversity and this needed to be communicated so they were not used for car parking;
- Residents and community groups should be encouraged, with the support of local Neighbourhood Officers, to take responsibility for local green spaces,
- An assurance was sought that appropriate consideration had been given to flood risk management as part of the Victoria North development;
- The communications strategy needed to be reviewed to ensure that all of the many positive examples of green initiatives, including those delivered by local business were celebrated as these could then inspire others to replicate or consider what they could do;
- Consideration needed to be given as to which employers we used in the report as positive examples of green infrastructure and employment;
- More information was sought on the approach to allotments, noting work needed to be done to stop the use of harmful pesticides in these locations;
- A ward map of all green spaces and land ownership should be provided to all local Neighbourhood Teams;

- Noting that both Manchester University and the Manchester Metropolitan University had volunteers available to assist with community groups establishing environmental projects; and
- The correct species of tree should be used for the identified location and consideration needed to be given as to how tree planting could support and enhance active travel schemes.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing welcomed the comments from the Committee. She stated that a review of the Core Strategy and Local Plan would be undertaken, and the views of the Committee would be used to inform these reviews. She advised that an audit of open spaces would be undertaken, and this would also consider factors such as access, quality and barriers. She stated that they did work with developers to maximise the delivery of green schemes and provided examples of these, noting that this also included the instalment of green walls and roof top gardens. She further commented that allotments were considered as part of the Parks Strategy however these sites would be captured as part of the open space audit. She further noted the comment regarding the use of the Airport as an example and reassured the Committee that there were many other positive examples that could be used in future reports.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that consideration would be given to providing ward based maps that mapped green space, however she advised that difficulties arose when identifying land that was privately owned. She added that this information would be shared with the relevant Neighbourhood Teams.

In response to an invitation from a Member for a representative from Planning and Building Control to be present at the planned Manchester Earth Summit 2022 conference, the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing committed to sending a representative to the event.

The Senior Policy Officer stated that he would circulate the Principles of Tree Management document to all Members for information, commenting that this document described the approach to street trees, adding that he would discuss the specific issue raised by the Members following the meeting. He further advised that the Tree Action Manchester programme did consider trees and green space in a wider context, such as the recognised health benefits. He further advised that the Our Rivers Our City would progress the work with blue infrastructure in collaboration with key partners.

In response to a specific question asked by a Member the Tree Officer stated that there was no policy of not planting hard standing trees, however the focus recently had been to prioritise soft scaping.

The Senior Policy Officer stated that the Biodiversity Net Gain legislation would be reviewed at a Greater Manchester level to ensure the best outcomes for Manchester could be achieved by adopting the correct policies as a result of this legislation.

The Executive Member for Environment stated that she welcomed the IPCC report and noted the key messages. She stated that she would be meeting with officers to

review a wide variety of work through this lens. She advised that she would circulate a summary of the IPCC report to Members following the meeting. She further commented that she would speak with her other Executive Member colleagues to address the issues raised by Members that cut across different remits, noting the comments regarding Housing Providers and support available to the VCSE sector to bid for funding to support green projects. She further recommended that an update report on the Bee Network is submitted for consideration in the new municipal year.

The Executive Member for Environment commented that she would speak with Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Employment with the view to arranging a briefing for Members on the Victoria North development, adding that work had been undertaken with the Environment Agency to consider flood risk management as part of the development planning.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/22/12 Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services - Future Delivery

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that described that the management of household waste is one of the key functions of the Local Authority and was a service of significant importance to every resident of the city. It was recognised that the current cleansing service standards were inconsistent across the city and did not meet the expectations of Members and residents. The future delivery arrangements for the service needed to ensure that the additional investment identified within the budget generated the maximum return and improvement.

The current contract for waste collection and street cleansing expired in 2038 but had two extension periods (2023 and 2031). As part of the commissioning cycle, the Council had reviewed the priorities for the next period and considered which delivery model could achieve these and Best Value.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and the Policy Framework background;
- An overview of the GM Refuse & Recycling Contract (Pre-2009)
- Information relating to the Greater Manchester Waste Levy;
- An overview of the current service;
- Performance information and feedback;
- A description of the Resources & Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England (2018);
- Service Improvement and the Service Improvement Programme Timescales, noting that this was subject to final approval;
- The delivery model;
- Conclusions and the decision making process; and
- The continuation of the contract with Biffa had been assessed as the most effective option.

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

- Requesting Quarterly update reports on the Waste and Recycling Service, including Biffa performance data;
- The need to monitor activities such as the collection of side waste from communal containers;
- A strategy was required to ensure that all Registered Housing Providers took responsibility for managing and removing waste from all of the spaces they were responsible for;
- A report was requested that described the implications of Household Waste and Recycling Centres' policies and incidents of flytipping;
- Consideration needed to be given to the timely issuing of licenses for the positioning of skips on highways and the lifting of parking restrictions to allow reputable waste management companies to access locations to remove waste;
- More needed to be done to improve recycling rates, noting the impact this could have on carbon emissions and further promotion of the circular economy;
- The sweeping of cycle lanes needed to be improved and be future proofed to manage the demand on this service as more active travel schemes were delivered;
- The need to recognise that the types of waste issues experienced were different in different wards and a 'one size fits all' approach was not appropriate, adding that meetings should be convened with ward Members to understand their specific issues and challenges experienced;
- The staff behaviours of Biffa crews needed to improve to ensure they delivered the levels of service that was expected;
- CCTV should be used to identify perpetrators of fly tipping in hot spots, noting that this would also assist with any subsequent convictions;
- More needed to be done to promote the bulky waste collection service, particularly to residents living in apartment blocks;
- The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) needed to be improved to give both Members and residents confidence when reporting issues relating to waste and fly tipping;
- Noting that it was national Food Waste week;
- Consideration needed to be given to delivering targeted waste and recycling campaigns during specific faith celebrations; and
- Seeking an assurance that a representative from the service would be present at the planned School and Climate Action Conference in June.

The Strategic Lead, Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing supported the recommendation to provide quarterly progress reports, adding that the issues raised relating to side waste in communal bin areas, staff behaviours and the cleansing of cycleways were included within the Service Improvement Plan.

The Strategic Lead, Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing accepted the invitation for a representative from her service to attend the School and Climate Action Conference, adding that Biffa did engage with schools on the issue of waste and recycling. She stated that all channels of communication and engagement needed to be utilised to influence behaviour change.

The Strategic Lead, Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing commented that a review of the bulky waste collection service would be undertaken to understand further the use of this service with the intention to optimise its use. She informed the Committee that the replacement of the CRM system was underway, and her service had been involved in the ask of the new system so as to address the issues identified by the Members and deliver an improved system. She commented recycling rates needed to improve adding further that more needed to be done to promote the circular economy with an emphasis on repair and reuse. She added that more needed to be done to promote and connect residents to these opportunities, adding that this would be a key action to progress.

The Director of Commercial and Operations commented that investment had been made into CCTV systems to tackle fly tipping, adding that the operation of CCTV was subject to specific legal guidance.

The Executive Member for Environment stated that she was committed to improving the service by working with Biffa and the delivery of the Service Improvement Plan. She stated that it was everyone's collective responsibility to reduce the incidents of littering and the appropriate management of waste.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/22/13 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.

The Chair noted that the new Chair and Committee would hold a work programming session at the meeting in May, in the first meeting of the new municipal year to consider the Work Programme. Noting the comments and requests for future reports when the Committee considered the previous agenda items.

Decision

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme, noting the above comments.

ECCSC/22/14 Councillor Igbon

The Committee recognised that this would be the last meeting that Councillor Igbon would attend in her capacity as Chair. Members wished to place on record their appreciation for her dedication and commitment to the work of the Committee.