

Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Doswell, Holt, Hughes, Ilyas, Lyons, Nunney, Razaq and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Chohan

Also present:

Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

ECCSC/22/39 Minutes

Decision

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

ECCSC/22/40 Revenue Budget Update - Cover Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that set out the financial challenge facing the Council, the latest forecast position, and the next steps.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £44m in 2023/24, £85m in 2024/25, and £112m by 2025/26. After the use of c£16m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, this gap reduced to £28m in 2023/24, £69m in 2024/25 and £96m by 2025/26;
- Setting out the high-level position;
- Describing the officer identified potential savings options to reduce the budget gap totalling £42.3m over three years;
- Noting that even after these proposals there remained a budget gap of £7m to close to get to a balanced budget in 2023/24 and further savings options would be developed between now and January 2023 and be reported back to Scrutiny committees in February; and
- Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agrees to the final budget proposals in February 2023.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/22/41 Neighbourhood Directorate 2023/24 Budget

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Neighbourhood Services that described that this report was the first in the cycle for the budget programme 2023-26. It set out an overview of the services within the remit of this scrutiny committee and their key priorities. The budget growth assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan were set out. The report provided a draft set of officer proposals for further savings for 2023-26, developed in the context of the financial challenge facing the Council.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an overview of the service and priorities;
- A description of the service budget and the proposed changes;
- Describing the proposed savings programme;
- Workforce implications;
- Equality and Anti Poverty Impact; and
- Future opportunities and risk.

The Chair in opening this item of business stated that the Leader, Councillor Craig, had written an open letter to the PM, Rishi Sunak to discuss the role cities could play in addressing the urgent challenge of climate change and what the Government needed to do to support it.

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

- The Committee condemned the government for failing to adequately fund Local Authorities;
- Stating that the current government was not committed to addressing climate change;
- Noting that the continued imposed budget cuts on the city could potentially hamper the good work underway by the Council to deliver on its carbon reduction ambitions;
- Noting that these budget cuts were being imposed at the time of a cost of living crisis;
- Noting that continued imposed budget cuts harmed the residents of the city;
- Consideration needed to be given to maximising revenue to the Council from commercial events that were delivered in Manchester parks;
- Information was requested on the decision not to host bonfire events across Manchester parks;
- A concern was expressed that charging residents for replacement recycling bins could result in increased incidents of flytipping;
- Were abandoned domestic bins reused;
- Could any savings be realised through a review of the Biffa contract;
- An assurance was sought that there was currently no proposal to withdraw any of the Climate Change Priorities listed; and
- Concern was raised in regard to the proposal to temporarily suspend gulley cleaning, especially at this time of year.

In response to the comments and questions from the Committee, the Parks Lead informed the Members that an assessment of the savings achieved through

withdrawing bonfire events compared to any further demand of community safety interventions, noting the discussion regarding anti-social behaviour associated with bonfire period, would be undertaken. She advised that analysis of this would inform future budget proposals. The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that bonfires also needed to be considered in terms of the environment and emissions. Members were also advised that a commercial strategy related to parks did exist, noting that this was in the process of being reviewed. Members recommended that an update report on this would be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time, adding that it was important to recognise that parks were invaluable spaces for residents of Manchester, especially at this time of a cost of living crisis.

In response to the discussion on bins, the Director of Commercial and Operations, Waste Recycling and Street Cleaning advised that where possible, abandoned bins were collected, emptied, cleaned and reused, adding that there was a significant cost associated to this process. He advised that most other authorities charged for replacement recycling bins and there currently was a charge for replacement grey bins. The Committee were advised that the Biffa contract was closely monitored and opportunities for efficiency savings were always considered, noting that there were currently no budget savings proposals to be achieved via this contract.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that there were no proposals to reduce the resources allocated to deliver the Climate Change Priorities, however, she expressed caution that difficult decisions could not be ruled out in future years.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that a briefing note on the approach to gully cleansing would be circulated following the meeting.

In closing this item of business, the Chair noted that the discussion had prompted requests for additional reports, namely the item on parks and commercial activity and how this could be used to generate income and also a report on the incidents of flytipping and the introduction of charging for replacement domestic recycling bins. The Chair advised that the work programme would be updated to include the items requested by Members.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCSC/22/42 Embedding a Zero-Carbon Workforce Culture

The Committee considered the report of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Transformation that provided information on the progress being made towards embedding a zero-carbon culture within the Council (as part of the Carbon Literacy journey).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the '*Manchester City Council - Climate Change Action Plan - Work Plan 2022-23*' set out activity to be

progressed to support the delivery of the '*Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-25*';

- In 2020 the Our Manchester Strategy was reset, placing a more explicit focus on zero-carbon at the heart of the strategy which subsequently became a priority within the City Council's Corporate Plan;
- Providing an update on key progress to date, noting that Carbon Literacy training was developed with The Carbon Literacy Project and was launched in 2019;
- As of January 2022, the Carbon Literacy Training was a mandatory training course for all Council employees;
- Senior Leaders in the Council would continue to be a priority group, with steps to ensure that new senior starters (alongside all new starters) completed the training within 12 weeks of their start/move date;
- Having achieved Silver Accredited status earlier this year, the next target was to achieve Gold Accredited status by 2025 whereby 50% of our employees would be accredited as Carbon Literate;
- Elected Members were encouraged to complete the training and at the time of reporting, 53 of 96 members had been certified as carbon literate;
- Recognising that there was an appetite for the Carbon Literacy training to be upscaled beyond the City Council directly employed workforce as part of the next phase of the training;
- Noting there was an action to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Carbon Literacy training;
- Embedding zero-carbon as a Council priority within new and updated policies and strategies;
- Describing the approach to communications to articulate the Council's story of positive climate action;
- A summary of the work undertaken with schools and education settings across the city to support them to develop and deliver actions to reduce their carbon emissions; and
- Providing a number of Carbon Literacy case studies.

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

- Welcoming the progress reported to date;
- Welcoming the examples of how the carbon literacy training had been embedded across the workforce;
- Congratulating the team for achieving the Silver Accreditation status from the Carbon Literacy Project, noting that the City Council was still only one of three Local Authorities to be Silver Accredited alongside Dacorum Borough Council and North Somerset Council;
- Was the target of 50% of employees to be accredited as Carbon Literate by 2025 ambitious enough;
- Consideration should be given to extending the training as a potential revenue stream for the Council;
- Members should be involved in training of community groups, noting their role as community leaders; and
- Noting that consideration needed to be given to how training was delivered, noting the need for this to be delivered in different languages.

The Head of Organisational Development updated the Committee by advising that since the report had been published 1631 members of staff had completed their Carbon Literacy Training; and all of the officers at the Senior Leadership level would have completed their training by the end of December of this year. She further advised that 79 Councillors had completed the training to date and all of the remaining Members would have completed this by the end of December of this year. She advised that access to this training had been made easier to improve uptake and added that all new starters to the organisation and movers within the organisation were required to complete this mandatory training within 13 weeks of commencing their role. She advised that Carbon Literacy Training for Trainers opportunities were also being improved, with a commitment from managers that interested staff would be released from their role to facilitate this, noting that this was a good personal development opportunity for staff. She added that Carbon Literacy Training would also form part of the new Members induction programme. In terms of the targets for training staff she commented that it was important to recognise the levels of staff turnover, however this target for staff training was monitored and reviewed.

The Head of Organisational Development stated that there was an ambition to extend this training to groups and audiences outside of the Council, however this could not be done at the detriment to training the Manchester City Council workforce. The Assistant Chief Executive added that the Council worked closely with the Manchester Climate Change Partnership to consider delivering wider training opportunities, including working with schools.

The Head of Organisational Development stated that there was evidence that the carbon reduction had become embedded across teams, noting that this was reflected in conversations and decisions taken by teams. She stated that examples of good practice were communicated and shared between departments. The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport informed the Committee that there was a cross council department working party to consider climate change, recognising that this issue was cross cutting and could not be considered in silos. She added that this group would include consideration of next steps and opportunities for rolling out carbon literacy training outside of the Council.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport informed the Committee that there was a wealth of programmes and initiatives being delivered across the city to address climate change and consideration would be given as to how to best capture and record this wealth of activity, recognising the comments made regarding the need to articulate and promote examples of good practice.

The Head of Neighbourhoods advised the Committee that Neighbourhood Officers engaged in strength-based conversations with residents and community groups to understand their specific requirements and asks to support them develop environmental projects and initiatives.

Decision

To note the report.

Update on the Role of Neighbourhood Teams in Developing Local Climate Change Activity and Partnership Working

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided updated information on how the Neighbourhood Teams and Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers were supporting local communities to engage in local climate change activity and reduce their carbon footprint.

The report included an update on ward level Climate Change Action Plans and an update on the In Our Nature programme pilot schemes and future delivery of the programme.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an update on ward level Climate Change Action Plans;
- Examples of developing best practice to support local communities to deliver activities that contributed to the city's ambition of becoming a net zero carbon city by 2038;
- An update on the In Our Nature programme pilot schemes and future delivery of the programme;
- Community engagement and awareness raising update, noting that the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF) provided local communities with funding to make their neighbourhoods better places to live. £20,000 of NIF was available for each ward in Manchester to help groups deliver events and initiatives that benefited the community;
- Examples of the work delivered with children and young people across the city;
- Describing initiatives on active travel, clean air and transport;
- The consideration and approach to inclusivity and diversity;
- An update on the communications campaign; and
- Conclusions and priorities for the next twelve months.

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

- Good practice and lessons learnt should be shared across Neighbourhood Teams working in wards;
- Recognising the need to maximise the impact and outcomes of this work whilst recognising the differences and challenges experienced by different neighbourhoods; and
- Noting feedback from residents in relation to ward level Climate Change Action Plans it was proposed to establish a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Wright to evaluate the plans and the associated Key Performance Indicators and other meaningful outcome measurements and reporting.

The Neighbourhoods Strategic Lead advised the Committee that an event had been recently held that brought staff from the different Neighbourhood Teams together to share their experiences and lessons learnt. She advised that this had been a very productive exercise and the intention was to repeat this periodically. She further advised that an outcome of this exercise was to create a library of best practice that would act as a resource for officers. The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that a similar event would be arranged for Members in the new year.

The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that there was challenge in providing ward specific emissions data, however work was underway with the Tyndall Centre and the Climate Change Partnership to develop more detailed analysis and modelling of this in the 6 areas where the Our Nature project had been delivered. She further referred to the CREDS online tool as useful resource for local groups and Councillors.

The Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods addressed the Committee and made reference to the work that was being delivered in his ward. He stated that it was important that businesses were actively engaged on the issue of climate change, in particular in regard to waste and litter.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that Neighbourhood Officers were a vital link to communities, noting that they engaged with residents on a host of various issues however everything was underpinned by addressing climate change. She commented that she recognised that ward level Climate Change Action Plans needed to be led and informed by residents and they should respond to the concerns and ambitions of those residents, adding that these also needed to be culturally responsive and appropriate. She further commented that staff in the Neighbourhood Teams were pivotal in bringing groups and services together at a local level and an update on this activity could be provided to Committee at a future meeting.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that it was important to listen to and respond to the concerns of young people on the issue of climate change. She further paid tribute to the Manchester Climate Change Youth Board noting that they would be hosting a Youth Climate Change Conference, Saturday 12 November 2022.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods and the Committee paid tribute and appreciation to all of the staff working on behalf of our residents in the Neighbourhood Teams.

Decision

To recommend that a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Wright be established to evaluate the ward level Climate Change Action Plans and the associated Key Performance Indicators and other meaningful outcome measurements and reporting.

ECCSC/22/44 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 commented that a number of additional reports had been requested following discussion on the previous agenda items. The Chair stated that she would

speak with the relevant Executive Members regarding the appropriate scheduling of these items and the work programme would be updated accordingly.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme, noting the above comment.