

# **Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019**

### **Present:**

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Chohan, Flanagan, Harland, Hassan, Hewitson, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lyons, Noor, Reid, Sadler, Strong, White and Wright

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

Councillor Chris Paul, Councillor for Withington ward

James Hall, Senior Project Officer, Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Jo Fraser, Manchester River Valleys Officer, Groundwork Trust

Mike Duddy, Mersey Rivers Trust

Jon Stopp, Friends of the Rochdale 9 Volunteer Group

**Apologies:** Councillors Appleby and Lyons

### **NESC/19/01            Minutes**

A Member enquired if the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport was able to provide the Committee with an update on the recommendation made at the previous meeting in relation to extending the Chorlton Road corridor consultation exercise.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport confirmed that the consultation exercise had been extended to the 25 of January 2019. She thanked the local ward Members for their efforts to promote the consultation exercise with local residents and businesses.

### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018 as a correct record.

### **NESC/19/02            Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Development and the Deputy Chief Executive that provided the Committee with information on the three year review of Manchester's Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy, including specific progress on the Implementation Plan over the last year, an update on Manchester in Bloom and the draft Principles of Tree Management.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Describing the Strategy within a policy and wider strategic context;

- Describing the four objectives and associated actions of the G&BI Strategy and Stakeholder Implementation Plan;
- An update on the three year review of the G&BI Strategy;
- An update on the Tree Action Plan and presenting the document entitled 'Principles of Tree Management', noting that over 8,500 trees had been planted in the city over the last three years as well as over 4,000 hedge trees and 43 community orchards;
- A description of how the G&BI Strategy influenced developments and strategic regeneration across the city;
- Projects delivered in conjunction with a range of partners with schools and local communities, including case studies;
- An update on the Manchester in Bloom initiative and how this had changed over the years to facilitate successful community led projects and responded to budgetary pressures; and
- The key priorities identified for 2019.

In addition to the report the Committee also heard from a number of invited guests who described the various activities undertaken with partners and voluntary and community groups to improve local green and blue areas and engage with residents and schools.

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

- What was the approach taken to replacing dead or damaged trees;
- What was the approach to dealing with established trees that caused an issue to the immediate footway as a result of their root system;
- Did the strategy link into operational policies, such as street cleaning;
- Were Greater Manchester Police (GMP) involved in the coordination and planning of schemes to ensure public safety is considered;
- Were Peel Holdings, a significant land owner in the city engaged with the strategy;
- What was being done to improve the stretch of the River Medlock in the city centre;
- What was being done to mitigate the impacts of major infrastructure projects, such as HS2 on the local wildlife;
- There was little support from the Canal and Rivers Trust in Manchester compared to the support offered to other areas;
- More needed to be done to connect with, and support local residents, especially in the more deprived areas of the city, for example around Bloom activities;
- Consideration needed to be given to installing lighting along the Fallowfield loop; and
- Recognising the positive impact the Forest Schools Programme had on children and their learning.

The Team Leader Arboriculture informed the Committee that the ambition was always to replace any lost tree within a 12 month period. He stated it may be perceived that a tree was not being replaced depending on the time of year, advising that the replacement trees were delivered after Christmas each year and the schedule of planting would then commence.

The Team Leader Arboriculture responded to the comment regarding root damage to footways by saying this is an issue experienced nationally and always proved to be a controversial topic. He said that overwhelmingly residents did not wish to have tree's removed, noting the many benefits that tree's brought to a street scape. He advised that they always worked with colleagues in the Highways Department to repair any damage caused by roots and a tree would only ever be removed if absolutely necessary.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport reiterated the point that residents felt very passionately about maintaining trees in their neighbourhood and made reference to recent correspondence she had received from a young resident on Manchester.

The Senior Policy Officer reported that the Green and Blue Governance Board ensured that the strategy complemented wider operational policies and he commented that this activity had improved over the years. He advised that public safety was considered and all relevant parties, including GMP were involved with the planning and coordination of projects. He confirmed that dialogue had been entered into between Peel Holdings and the Irwell Catchment Partnership. He also confirmed that the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit were involved in the consideration of major infrastructure projects, such as HS2.

In regard to the River Medlock in the city centre the Manchester River Valleys Officer acknowledged that there were sections that would benefit from improvement works, however due to the issue of silt and the risk this could pose to the many historic buildings, any dredging or clearance work had to be managed very carefully.

The Neighbourhood Officer acknowledged the comments regarding the need to support local residents who wished to be involved with Manchester in Bloom and advised that he would welcome any referrals from Members and he gave a commitment that he would follow those up.

## **Decisions**

The Committee: -

1. Note the progress that has been made towards achieving the objectives of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy as set out in the three year review;
2. Note the progress made by both the Council and external stakeholders in achieving the actions in the annual update of the Implementation Plan including progress on Manchester in Bloom;
3. Note the priorities for the Green & Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan set out for the coming year and contained; and
4. Note the Principles of Tree Management which, as a document arising out of an approved Implementation Plan, will be subject to delegated approval by the Deputy Chief Executive.

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive that provided an update on progress in the preparation of a Greater Manchester wide feasibility study (Clean Air Plan) into the options available to address Nitrogen Dioxide exceedances, and to outline a broad direction of travel in relation to next steps and decision making.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- A description of the air quality in Greater Manchester;
- The impact of poor air quality and the case for change;
- Policy background;
- UK Air Quality Plans; and
- The options for consideration by Greater Manchester and the direction of travel.

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

- The Committee were unanimous in their disappointment in receiving the report late, commenting that it was important for both Members and citizens of the city to receive information in a timely manner;
- Members fully supported the ambition of the plan to improve air quality, noting the significant health outcomes poor air quality had on the residents of Manchester;
- The Mayor of Greater Manchester should take immediate action to regulate the bus fleet;
- The plan needed to address diesel trains, the impact of motorways and diesel vehicles used at the airport site;
- The plan should not be used to penalise the poorest residents across GM, especially those with poor public transport links;
- An appropriate vehicle scrappage scheme was required;
- More needed to be done to address the issue of polluting taxi's trading within the city who were not licensed by Manchester;
- The report did not mention or offer any target to address particulate matter, noting the associated health risks;
- HGVs should not be driven through the city during rush hour;
- Impact Assessments needed to be undertaken regarding clean air zones, with particular consideration given to self-employed people;
- Consideration needed to be given to adopting the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on planning; and
- More monitoring of air quality in wards needed to be undertaken.

Councillor Paul, Chair of the Air Quality Task and Finish Group provided the Members with an overview of the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group that had concluded with 17 recommendations. He commented that the EU targets for air quality were very challenging however it was important to meet these, noting that the targets set by the World Health Organisation were even more challenging, and did include specific targets in relation to particulate matter. He stated that the information provided to residents needed to be accurate and not misleading, commenting that

the offer of free weekend parking in the city centre gave a mixed message when the intention was to increase the use of public transport as a means of travel and reduce the number of journeys undertaken by car. He further advised the Committee that Friends of the Earth provided testing kits and provided analysis for a very modest fee.

The Head of City Policy informed the Members that the Committee would have the opportunity to consider and comment upon the outline business case when this was available and a full consultation exercise with residents would be undertaken. The Chair recommended that when the business case was presented to the Committee both the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Chris Boardman were to be invited to attend and contribute to the discussion.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport welcomed the comments from the Committee on this important area of work. She said this work was very complex and Manchester was working closely with the other nine authorities to ensure the final plan was appropriate and complemented other strategies. She said that work was also underway with health partners and Transport for Greater Manchester to develop the plan, noting that responsibility for the motorway network remained with central government.

## **Decision**

The Committee recommend that when the outline business case is submitted for consideration that the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Chris Boardman be invited to attend and contribute to the discussion.

## **NESC/19/04                      Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy - Executive Member for Neighbourhoods**

The Committee considered the reports of the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods that provided an overview of work undertaken, and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within the respective Executive Member's portfolio.

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

- What was being done to monitor the Biffa contract, noting that residual waste had not been collected after the Christmas period and consideration needed to be given to arranging additional collections over this period;
- Flytippers needed to be pursued and prosecuted, with perpetrators named and shamed;
- Welcoming the Executive Member responding to the recommendations made by the Committee in relation to waste storage and fire safety in apartment blocks;
- Was there any evidence of additional costs as a result to recycling changes being passed onto residents in apartment blocks;
- The 'Recycle for GM' did not always work correctly;
- Was too much leniency given to business operating within the city centre, who's activities contributed to rubbish by the enforcement teams; and

- Consideration should be given to instructing Biffa to collect all waste on their next rounds.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods thanked Members for their continued challenge, noting that the views and concerns of the Committee had been taken into consideration when introducing the changes to recycling collections in apartment blocks. He stated that he was unaware of any costs being transferred to residents as a result of these changes during phase one and two, however if Members were aware of any he encouraged the Members to inform him of these and this would be investigated.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that his work complemented the wider Manchester Green and Blue Strategy, giving the example that options for the licensing of electric vehicles as taxis in the city were being considered to address the issue of emissions and improve air quality.

In response to the comments made regarding the Biffa contract and waste collection over the Christmas period, he stated that Biffa had invested in an additional 12 vehicles and the recent dispute with staff regarding night shift working had been resolved, however the pay dispute was a longstanding issue and negotiations were still ongoing. In response to the issue raised regarding the app he said he would feed this back and he would also consider the options for additional collections over the Christmas period.

With regard to the issue of flytipping he said that Manchester had a strong record in pursuing and persecuting perpetrators and when prosecutions were successful these were publicised in the local press and via social media. He commented that the dedicated flytipping team was now established, and whilst improvements were being made the issue remained a challenge, however he was committed to addressing this issue that blighted neighbourhoods.

In response to waste associated with businesses in the city centre he advised that teams would always try and work with premises in the first instance to improve and address any issues, however there were occasions where it was appropriate to expedite enforcement action.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **NESC/19/05                      Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy - Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport**

The Committee considered the reports of the Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport that provided an overview of work undertaken, and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within the respective Executive Member's portfolio.

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

- Concern was raised that zero hours contracts were being used by subcontractors in the Highways department, in particular to the gulley cleaning service;
- Further consideration needed to be given to the timing of gulley and highways cleaning to maximise the benefits of this; and
- More needed to be done to publicise the social value work that was achieved through the Council's procurement process.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport informed the Members that she had been alerted to the concerns regarding the use of zero hour contracts and had charged officers to undertake an investigation into this allegation.

In regard to gulley cleaning and road sweeping she acknowledged that this could be compromised by vehicles blocking or restricting access. She said that efforts, including installing signage to give notice of cleaning dates were being used to notify residents and teams using blowers to move debris into the middle of the road from under and around parked vehicles so this could be collected more easily.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Planning and Transport stated that reports on Social Value and the Highways Department had been submitted to the Ethical Procurement and Contract Management Sub Group. She stated that the intention was to share this good practice and lessons learnt with other departments across the council. She acknowledged the comment regarding the need to communicate this good work with residents.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **NESC/19/06            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 Committee agreed to move the report listed for February on Homelessness and Manchester Move to the March meeting and add a report on Highways and the Flow of Traffic across the City to the February meeting.

The Chair stated that a session would be organised before the end of the month for Members and the Highways Department to discuss any outstanding concerns they had, in addition to the issues raised at the December 2018 meeting and an update on this would be provided to the March meeting.

## **Decisions**

The Committee notes the report and approve the work programme subject to the above amendments.