

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Collins, Holt, Ilyas, McCaul, Wiest and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Razaq

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Leisure

Matt Roberts, Strategic Director, Property and Development, Southway Housing Trust

ECCNSC/23/44 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/45 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2022/23 Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that presented the third Annual Report of the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-25.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that this report brought together updates to the Committee provided over the last 12 months (April 22 – March 23) into a single report and highlighted progress made during this time against the CCAP Work Plan 2022-23 as well as progress made on the Council's direct carbon emissions;
- Key messages;
- Key achievements; and
- Summary and next steps.

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

- Further information was sought regarding the reported sustainable practices within Highways;

- Recognising the significant challenges post 2025 to continue delivering on this important work and deliver the stated ambition for the organisation to become zero carbon by 2038 at the latest;
- Request that comparative data and analysis of the communications strategy was needed to understand the impact on behaviour change, recognising that this could be difficult to quantify and report;
- Analysis as to the impact of the poster and billboard campaigns was requested;
- Commenting that Active Travel schemes needed to be coordinated and linked up with neighbouring authority schemes to deliver connectivity across the city region;
- A request for information on the next round of tree planting; and
- Commenting on the need to decarbonise the national electricity grid.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer, Zero Carbon Team informed the Committee that Scope 3 emissions associated with Highways (Scope 3 encompasses emissions that are not produced by the company itself and were not the result of activities from assets owned or controlled by them, but by those that it's indirectly responsible for up and down its value chain) were not accounted in the carbon budget. The Chair commented that responsibility for Highways sat within the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and that she would speak with the Chair to discuss bringing a report on this area of activity to that Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer acknowledged the discussion regarding communications campaigns and informed the Committee that a substantive report was scheduled for consideration at the December meeting. Similarly, a report on a Power Purchase Agreement was listed for the November meeting. The Chair referred to a comment made regarding young people and climate change and advised that this had been considered recently by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and asked that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate the report that had been considered to all Committee members for information.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer noted the comments regarding Active Travel and commented that the next stage of planning around this activity would include consideration of joining up schemes as part of wider infrastructure planning considerations. She further commented that she shared Members' disappointment in relation to national policy towards decarbonisation of the national electricity grid.

The Zero Carbon Manager advised the Committee that discussions and planning were ongoing regarding establishing an action plan post 2025, acknowledging the comment from a Member regarding the importance of adaptation and resilience as part of these discussions.

The Zero Carbon Manager further responded to questions regarding resident engagement by advising that a report on Neighbourhood Teams Engagement with Residents was scheduled for consideration at the December meeting.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that work across Greater Manchester was ongoing in relation to Active Travel and expressed her

frustration that funding to deliver such schemes was piecemeal and inadequate to deliver the ambitions of the city region, however lobbying of government would continue on this subject. She advised that a report on the Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan was scheduled for the November meeting, and she further acknowledged the comment made regarding the need to promote diversity when encouraging cycling.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport informed the Committee that a report on the Tree and Woodland Action Plan was listed for consideration at the November meeting, adding that Members were informed via the regular Member communication channels when any planting of trees in their ward was scheduled.

The Chair concluded this item of business by acknowledging the work delivered by all the officers working in this area of activity and paid tribute to their continued dedication to this important work.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/46 Street Cleansing Programme and Campaigns Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on street cleansing services and the Keep Manchester Tidy programme. Describing how the activity contributes to protecting the environment, climate change agenda and key priorities for future.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information regarding cleansing standards;
- Information relating to the street cleansing contract;
- An update on the additional investment in waste collection and street cleansing services;
- Improvements to the street cleansing model;
- Street cleansing performance;
- Information on education, awareness and engaging local communities;
- Trials and innovations to tackle all forms of littering; and
- Priorities for 2023/24.

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

- Information was requested on the criteria and definitions of the cleansing standards;
- Information was sought as to the location of the additional (200) litter bins secured through the investment to deliver service improvements;
- The challenge presented by different landowners across the city to apply consistent cleansing standards;
- How did activities associated with building works and construction impact on Biffa and service delivery;

- How could Members engage with, and seek to influence Keep Manchester Tidy campaigns; and
- The importance of maintaining cleaning standards in cycle lanes to ensure they remained safe for users.

The Contract Manager, Waste acknowledged the comments and requests from Members around the issue of standards and their application and monitoring; information on the steam cleaning trials in district centres; approach to cycle lane cleansing and suggested that he prepared a detailed briefing note to be circulated following the meeting. He further extended an invitation to Members to accompany officers when undertaking inspections.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team advised that the trials relating to litter bins waste storage containers, measures to target harden infrastructure and the additional bins were initially in the city centre, and consideration would be given as to other appropriate locations. Investment had been agreed to replace litter bin infrastructure citywide. She further commented that they worked closely with different landowners to influence improvements and that they worked with Biffa to reduce the escape of detritus when bins were emptied.

The Project Officer advised that Keep Manchester Tidy campaigns were fast paced projects and acknowledged that timely communications with Members on these activities needed to be strengthened. She discussed the campaign delivered on the issue of discarded chewing gum, commenting that this had been delivered in partnership with City Co and the Universities. She added that consideration was being given as to how this campaign could be rolled out wider across the city.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods addressed comments made regarding comparative data across different wards and expressed caution as it was important to acknowledge that different wards and localities presented different opportunities and challenges. She informed Members that the autumn street cleansing programme would be communicated to all Members via the usual communication channels. She further commented that Members should liaise with their respective Neighbourhood Teams about local Keep Manchester Tidy projects. Noting a comment from the Chair regarding the importance of maintaining standards and leaf removal from cycle lanes she stated that if there were specific locations of concern that Members contact the relevant officers so these could be addressed.

The Chair concluded this item of business by acknowledging the work delivered by all the officers working in this area of activity.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/47 Housing Retrofit

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on the Council's proposals to decarbonise the city's housing, incorporating an update on Green Skills.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the subject area;
- Discussion of the approach to Social Housing, including Council owned properties;
- Consideration of Private Sector Housing;
- Consideration of the approach to cross tenure housing and area based schemes;
- Engagement activity;
- Skills, including the Greater Manchester approach;
- Funding considerations;
- The importance of partnership working;
- Discussion of internal staff resources;
- Information on developing a Retrofit Plan document; and
- Conclusion.

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

- Calling for continued lobbying of the government for the decarbonisation of the national grid;
- Calling for continued lobbying of the government for adequate financial resources to deliver the scale of retrofitting required across the city region, particularly to address the barriers experienced in the private rented sector;
- The need to regulate heat networks to protect residents from unreasonable price hikes in their energy;
- Were there any pilot schemes that individual tenants, keen to adopt new technologies and alternatives to address climate change could access;
- What work was being done with property managing agents and leaseholders to support and allow tenants / occupiers to install new technologies such as solar panels etc;

The Committee heard from Matt Roberts, Strategic Director, Property and Development, Southway Housing Trust who delivered a presentation that discussed the Arrowfield Low Carbon Communities Project. He informed the Committee that Southway had pledged to become a zero-carbon organisation by 2038, following Greater Manchester's climate emergency declaration. Switching from gas to electricity was one way to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. The Low Carbon Living Project was helping Southway's tenants on the Arrowfield estate switch to cleaner, greener, and cheaper energy to heat their homes.

Mr Roberts explained that many of the heating systems in the homes on the Arrowfield estate were old and needed replacing. The government will be banning gas boilers in new properties in 2025, so replacing like for like would not be appropriate. Therefore, Southway had decided to invest in heating and hot water systems that did not use gas. The old gas systems would be replaced with new 'air source heat pump' technology that only used electricity. In addition, other energy saving projects would be carried out at the same time, such as improved loft and cavity wall insulation. These improvements could reduce households' carbon footprint by as much as 50%.

There were nearly 400 properties on the Arrowfield estate, making it one of Southway's biggest neighbourhoods. Therefore, the Low Carbon Living Project would make a significant impact on Southway achieving its zero-carbon ambitions.

He advised the committee of the challenges experienced when delivering this project and the lessons learnt. He said that it was important to engage with the District Network Operator at the earliest opportunity and emphasised the importance of meaningful, ongoing resident engagement. He also stated that issues and delays had arisen when seeking relevant planning permissions that had not been anticipated. The Chair thanked Mr Roberts for attending the meeting and sharing the experience of Southway Housing Trust. She commented that the learning from delivering this project should be shared across all housing providers at an appropriate time. In response to a question from the Chair, the Executive Member for Housing and Development confirmed that he would facilitate meetings and dialogue between the planning department and Southway Housing Trust.

The Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Leisure provided an update on the developments across the education and training sector, referenced at sections 7 and 8 of the report. The Committee noted the importance of green skills and training and welcomed the update. The Chair advised the Committee that Skills Development sat within the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The Zero Carbon Programme Manager addressed the issue of the private rented sector and commented that this was a very challenging sector to engage with. She stated that all opportunities and levers were used to engage with private landlords on this subject.

In response to the specific questions relating to individual tenants and pilot schemes and the issue of managing agents, officers advised that they would follow this up outside of the meeting and contact the Member directly.

The Head of Strategic Housing acknowledged the comment and concern regarding the Heat Network and advised that the Council managed and controlled this system.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport advised that the Climate Change Partnership continued to lobby the government for appropriate levels of funding to deliver the scale of work required across the city region, adding that historically funding had been piecemeal that had to be bid for.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/48 Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on progress following the adoption of the Manchester Electric Vehicle Charging (EV) Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the topic,
- Discussion of the main challenges;
- Information in relation to Public Charging Network;
- The Public EV Procurement Process;
- The approach to support the move towards a cleaner taxi fleet;
- Consideration of the requirements for the installation of EV charge points as part of both new build developments and change of use developments;
- Consideration of the council's own vehicle fleet; and
- Consideration of on-street charging, noting that this presented particular challenges, especially in residential areas with informal parking arrangements such as terraced streets.

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

- Articulating the request from residents for additional on-street EV charging points, especially in high density areas such as the city centre, and reflecting the proportion of areas in the city there is no or little off-street parking
- Additional information was requested on the data and information that had been used to inform the report;
- Suggesting increased access for the public to charging points by working with employers who provide EVs on their sites and owned land;
- The need to consider all viable options and opportunities to deliver on-street EV charging to give residents confidence to change to an electric vehicle; and
- Need and demand for EV charging across the whole of the city needed to be considered.

The Principal Policy Officer informed the Committee that a draft list of locations (over 40 in total) had been developed and internal agreement was currently being sought for these locations to supply, install, manage and operate a scheme of up to 200 connectors (100 dual headed chargepoints) to be installed over a two year period. The locations were geographically spread across the city to ensure that chargepoints would be accessible to as many residents as possible. She said that the Members would have sight of these locations prior to a go-live date, however at this time it was not possible to share more widely as these were subject to change and not finalised. She advised that consideration was given to maximising all opportunities using Council owned land and appropriate consideration was given to developments in battery technology.

The Principal Policy Officer discussed the issue of the use of lamp posts to deliver EV charging on- street. She stated this was not considered as a viable option due to a number of factors, including the position of lampposts at the rear of pavements; capacity within the existing grid, adding that lampposts would only offer a very slow charge time; costs associated with additional necessary highways works to deliver that type of EV charging facility.

The Interim Head of Infrastructure and Environment commented that Manchester continued to discuss and learn from other authorities on this issue.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport commented that Manchester was constrained due to the inadequate funding from government to progress this work. She said that despite this all opportunities were explored to support residents transition to electric vehicles. She proposed to review the strategy as it was clear that members felt that it needed to demonstrate more ambition. She further stated that this programme of work needed to be considered in the wider strategic context of citywide travel including via public transport and active travel.

Decision

The Committee recommend that a review of the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy be undertaken in due course to more rapidly increase the proportion of residents able to change to an electric vehicle with confidence.

ECCNSC/23/49 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 requested an update report on Housing Retrofit and an update on the delivery of the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy be included on the Committee's Work Programme for consideration at an appropriate time.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme, subject to the above comments.