

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

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

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

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

Councillor Simcock, Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kilpatrick, Member of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Samantha Nicholson, Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

ECCNSC/23/65 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 November 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/66 Climate Change Communications

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Strategic Communications that provided an update on the Council's Climate Change Communications approach and supporting activity.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting the four-pronged approach to climate change communications and engagement activity;
- Reporting that the communications team worked with members of the Zero Carbon Coordination Group (ZCCG) and workstream members to communicate climate change messages on a regular and ongoing basis;
- An update on behavioural change campaigns;
- Discussion on the approach to evaluating climate change communications;
- Climate change research and key findings; and
- Citywide climate change campaign.

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

- How had the participants of the focus groups referred to in the report been selected, and was socio-economic background taken into consideration;
- Welcoming and supporting the identification of 'a call for action' as a key finding of the focus groups;

- The importance of promotion of Council activities on the issue of climate change;
- Welcoming the development of the communications group and the range of partners involved in this work, and requesting that future update reports include discussion of this work;
- Were communication campaigns delivered in different languages;
- The need to acknowledge and reflect consideration of the impact of the cost of living crisis across all communications campaigns; and
- The importance of utilising social media to maximise and extend the reach of campaigns and awareness on the issue of climate change.

The Head of Strategic Communications said that the focus groups were drawn upon from participants from survey work that had been undertaken with people being invited to participate. He said that communications campaigns were tailored and targeted to be the most appropriate for the intended audience. He commented that consideration was given to utilising other campaigns to reiterate the climate change message and promote relevant activities and events. He said that communications were not routinely translated, however when appropriate to do so they would be and using trusted community networks assisted in the delivery of information and advice. He acknowledged the comments made regarding the cost of living crisis and said that it was never the intention to shame people into action but rather to support and promote viable actions, such as the price cap on bus fares as part of the wider promotion of the Bee Network.

The Chair commented that within the report it referred to a detailed report on the analysis of subgroups and asked that this be circulated to all members of the Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/67 Update on the role of Neighbourhood Teams in engaging Manchester residents on Climate Change

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that described 12 months of activity to engage, support and activate Manchester residents to engage in local climate change activity and reduce their carbon footprint.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing updated information summarising activity delivered by the Neighbourhood Teams across the city to influence behaviour and support communities to implement local climate action at ward and neighbourhood level in the last 12 months;
- An update on the development of Ward Climate Change Action Plans, including consideration of the recommendations of the Ward Climate Change Action Plans Task and Finish Group and publication of those plans to promote engagement and behaviour change;
- Information on the development of the monitoring framework to assess impact of those Ward Climate Change Action Plans;

- Examples of developing best practice in engagement at a local level contributing to the ambition of Manchester becoming a zero carbon city by 2038;
- Updates on the progress towards ward plans containing specific, measurable, achievable targets; and
- Summary and next steps.

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

- The Committee paid tribute to the staff working in Neighbourhood Teams, acknowledging the integral role they played in supporting residents and delivering climate change activities;
- Welcoming the development of Ward Climate Change Action Plans and suggesting that an event should be arranged to review these at an appropriate time;
- Would training that had been delivered to officers on Ward Climate Change Action Plans be extended to Councillors;
- What was the relationship between Ward Climate Change Action Plans and ward coordination;
- Was climate resilience acknowledged;
- Consideration needed to be given to the format of the Council's webpage where Ward Climate Change Action Plans were located as the landing page was not very engaging;
- The need to share best practice and learning across Neighbourhood Teams on the delivery of Ward Climate Change Action Plans;
- The importance of identifying key advocates and trusted networks in neighbourhoods to act as peer to peer coordinators on climate action; and
- Noting the importance of intergenerational work and activities on the subject of climate change.

The Strategic Lead, Neighbourhoods said that training could be arranged for Councillors. She informed the Committee that officers within the Neighbourhood Teams would be attending a first workshop on the issue of risk and resilience on Friday 15 December 2023. The intention was to build upon and enhance this learning. She described that Neighbourhood Managers were responsible for ward coordination and Climate Change Action Plans were an element of the wider ward plans. With regard to the webpage, she advised that she would review this but commented that there were restrictions as to what could be displayed on the Council's website as the site must be Disability Discrimination Act compliant.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that a review of ward coordination would be undertaken, noting that a 'one size fits all' approach was not appropriate as it needed to be fluid to reflect and respond to the needs and aspirations of the local neighbourhood. She further paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Teams especially in the context of their wider role and responsibilities. She stated that good practice and learning was shared across the different Neighbourhood Teams.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport acknowledged the discussion regarding the Council's website and commented that a wider review of this would be

undertaken to ensure that key messaging and information on climate change was reflected across all Council activities.

In concluding this item of business, the Chair commented on the positive progress reported to date and acknowledged the work undertaken by the Ward Climate Change Action Plans Task and Finish Group.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Executive Member for Environment and Transport and the Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods consider options for reviewing Ward Climate Change Action Plans, and this process to involve the voice of residents.

ECCNSC/23/68 Manchester Climate Change Agency In Our Nature Progress and Wider Community Engagement Update

The Committee considered the report of the Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency that provided an overview of Manchester Climate Change Agency's (MCCA's) community engagement activity over the past 12-months.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An update on the In Our Nature Programme, noting that to date the programme had engaged directly with over 650 Manchester residents in 15 Wards and was helping them to deliver 26 climate projects that included tackling energy efficiency at home, increasing use of public transport, local food growing, reducing textile waste and more.
- Information on the Manchester Climate Change Youth Partnership, noting that this Partnership was for 16–28-year-olds in Manchester who wanted to be part of climate change decision-making and action in the city. In 2021 the Youth Partnership produced its own Youth Manifesto which contains 7 key priorities for young people in Manchester; and
- Information on the EU FoodWave Project, noting that this project worked to build an international community of young people (aged 15-35) who were active across 17 countries worldwide. It aimed to create awareness of sustainable approaches to consuming and producing food in cities in support of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, and to have an influential voice in city-level decision making.

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

- Reiterating the invitation to the Manchester Climate Change Youth Partnership to engage with the Committee;
- The need to focus activities on those highest emitters of carbon; and
- Asking the Director of the Manchester Climate Change Agency if she was satisfied with the progress to date in relation to In Our Nature.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency stated that she was pleased with the In Our Nature progress to date, she described that there was activity across 15

wards, delivering a range of projects that were all aligned to the Framework. She said that they had very good relationships with the local Neighbourhood Teams that had resulted in a lot of synergy. She described that the range of engagement was good and balanced, and that good practice and learning was shared. She stated that the Local Area Carbon Footprints were a useful tool to identify those larger carbon emitting wards and could be used to inform local activities. She said that all levers and spheres of influence would continue to be utilised to inform and deliver campaigns on the issue of climate change.

In regard to the invitation to the Manchester Climate Change Youth Partnership, the Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency stated that she would pass this on again, adding that the Youth Partnership determined their own work programme.

Going forward, the Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency said the intention was to build on the positive work and experience to date to maximise impact and meet or exceed all milestones. She stated that it was an implicit understanding of the programme to reach and engage with new people on the issue of climate change, adding that this would form part of the overall evaluation.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/69 Embedding Carbon Literacy within the Council

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.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting the embedding zero-carbon in the workforce formed part of Workstream 5 'Catalysing Change and Behaviour Change' of the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan Work Plan; and
- Providing an update and narrative describing progress against identified actions.

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

- Was individual feedback obtained from participants who had undertaken the carbon literacy training;
- A member reported that he had attended the carbon literacy training and had found it very interesting and informative;
- Was there any consideration being given to delivering carbon literacy training to community groups and other relevant stakeholders outside of the Council; and
- Was there any capacity for teams working across the Council to discuss opportunities to take actions to reduce and if so was there a mechanism to measure impact and outcomes.

The Strategic Head of Organisational Development & Transformation welcomed the positive feedback from the Member of his experience when undertaking the training. She paid tribute to the team of trainers who were delivering this programme, adding that they were committed to delivering this training and that those staff had been formally accredited and was an opportunity for staff to undertake professional development. In response to a specific question, she confirmed that the training was extended to Manchester Active staff.

The Strategic Head of Organisational Development & Transformation responded by saying that individual feedback following training was obtained and this was reviewed. She said that this feedback had informed changes as to how the training was delivered following feedback on the issue of accessibility. She said that it was acknowledged that teams working across different Directorates had competing demands and working patterns so the training had been adapted so as to target teams so as to maximise take up. She said that all new staff were required to attend the carbon literacy training as part of their formal induction training.

She said that as part of Service Planning, teams were being asked to consider and embed carbon reduction and establish specific actions. Consideration would be given as to how this activity could be tracked and reported.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport made reference to a recent event at Central Library that she had attended where Community Leaders had undertaken Carbon Literacy training. She described this event as being very positive. She further commented that Manchester Council was leading on the issue of carbon literacy training for staff and that other authorities were seeking to replicate the Manchester model as it was recognised as good practice.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport noted the comments regarding extending the carbon literacy training to people outside of the Council, noting the issue of capacity that would be required to deliver this at scale. She said that options to deliver this were being discussed the Climate Change Agency. The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport commented that Manchester Metropolitan University had committed to delivering carbon literacy training to all their staff and students.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport concluded that positive progress had been made on the delivery of carbon literacy training for Council staff and this could be evidenced.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/70 Weed Pilot (Streets)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on the findings of a project undertaken during 2023 to trial an alternative weed control methodology (hot foam) to assess its effectiveness and viability as a potential alternative to glyphosate for weed control on streets.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the report did not include information about the approach to weed control for other land types maintained by the Council;
- The Council had adapted a service across different land types in-line with guidelines published by the Pesticide Action Network (PAN), to support the reduction of the use of glyphosate and utilising alternative approaches;
- Describing steps taken to reduce glyphosate use;
- Reporting that in March 2023, officers had undertaken a detailed look at whether hot foam could be utilised as a non-herbicide weed control treatment on streets in Manchester and providing an analysis of these trials;
- Conclusions of the trials undertaken with hot foam as a method of weed control, noting that hot foam did not yet represent a viable alternative;
- Describing that the trial had demonstrated the importance of testing alternative weed control methodology as part of the strategy to reduce dependency on glyphosate; and
- The Council would continue to horizon scan developments in alternative weed control methodologies and working practices within the sector, and the Council should seek to test other alternative methods as appropriate.

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

- Welcoming the reduction of the use of glyphosate;
- What would be the level of use of glyphosate in a blended model of weed control;
- Noting the cost analysis provided in relation to the use of hot foam, why was this still being considered as an option;
- Noting that the report referred to the use of different options as a method of weed control, what were they;
- Was there an opportunity for electric vehicles to be used for the delivery of hot foam;
- The need to engage and educate residents on the subject of weeds, noting that there were competing views on this issue and how residents regarded them;
- Noting the importance of consideration of biodiversity when considering the approach to weed control; and
- What was the feedback from residents in those pilot wards.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing stated that there were a range of factors to consider when deciding which approach was the most appropriate method of weed control, and that the intention was to strike the correct balance with due consideration given to all alternatives. She said that the use of hot foam would be one tool in a suite of options, noting that it had proven to be an effective method and consideration could be given as to modifying the model of delivery and responding to technological improvements. She stated that they were keenly alive to the discussions regarding the use of glyphosate and reiterated that the use of this had reduced over the years with due regard given to best practice and the recommendations from the Pesticide Action Network. Noting the need to balance an effective programme of weed control in the context of Council budgets and

environment considerations and the Council remained committed to trialling different alternative options of weed control.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing noted the comments from Members and stated that the intention was to establish a policy on the subject of weed control. The Committee welcomed this as a positive development, commenting that this would provide helpful clarification as to the Council's approach to this activity.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing acknowledged the discussion regarding engagement and education on the topic of weeds and the opposing views, adding that this would be included in future resident communications.

The Chair stated that local Councillors had been active in promoting and engaging with local residents in the selected pilot wards. She commented that the experience had been very positive.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that further research needed to be undertaken in regard to weed removal. She said that it was important to understand this activity in the context of the restraints on Council budgets and the ambition for the city to be clean and green and it was important to strike the correct balance. She further commented that it was important to manage resident expectations in regards to weed removal.

Decision

The Committee agree;

1. The Council's approach to reduce dependency on glyphosate in a phased approach, looking at a suite of herbicide free treatments to support this and build on success achieved to date.
2. To receive future updates on the approach in the annual waste and recycling report.

[Councillors Razaq, Shilton Godwin and Wright declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in this item as they are residents of the Chorlton Park ward that was referred to in the pilot scheme.]

ECCNSC/23/71 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.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.

ECCNSC/23/72 Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation – Power Purchase Agreement (Part A)

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update on the progress of the City Council's proposal to purchase renewable energy supplies via a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to ensure the Council has a long-term, cost-effective supply of renewable energy to meet its energy needs and achieve its Zero Carbon objectives to reduce the Council's CO2 emissions.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the Council's Climate Change Action Plan included a commitment to research and identify options for large scale renewable energy generation to deliver either a solar asset and / or suitable Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) to achieve a traceable, renewable energy source to deliver CO2 savings and maximise long-term benefits for the Council;
- Describing the background to the work undertaken to date, including an assessment of the Council's energy demand and relevant details of progress made to purchase a PPA for supply of energy to the Council;
- Information on the Council Energy Purchasing Policy and Integration with PPA Product; and
- Describing that the process of securing a Power Purchase Agreement, noting that following conclusion of the mandatory standstill period and subject to Council approval, the Council would formally announce the bidder which it would be contracting with on the PPA arrangement in January 2024.

The Chair had invited Councillor Simcock, Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Kilpatrick, member of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee to participate in this agenda item.

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

- Reiterating the position previously expressed by the Committee that the government had failed to decarbonise the national grid, adding that this abdication of leadership had placed an unfair burden on local authorities and set a dangerous precedent;
- This message needed be explicit in any future communications with residents on this issue;
- Had cooperative or mutual models of delivery been considered;
- Further information was sought on the procurement process and the due diligence process;
- Noting that these arrangements were not uncommon within the commercial sector; and
- What facilities would the electricity generated from the PPA service.

The Head of Commercial Governance, Assurance and Initiatives noted the comments expressed by the Committee in relation to the decarbonisation of the national grid and stated the delivery of a PPA would help the city achieve its carbon

reduction ambitions. With regard to cooperative and mutual models, she said options for this had been considered however they were not currently viable. In response to the historical decisions taken in relation to PPA she stated that those decisions were correct at that time. She confirmed that the electricity purchased through any PPA would service Council buildings, street lighting and the fleet. She acknowledged that this model was tried and tested in the private sector and commented that there was growing interest across the public sector in these arrangements.

The Head of Commercial Governance, Assurance stated that answers and detailed responses to Members questions and comments in relation to the procurement process would be addressed under the Part B confidential section of the meeting.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that she would continue to lobby the government on this issue of decarbonisation of the national grid. She stated the approach to the PPA had been rigorously tested by the Tyndall Centre and they were supportive of the proposals to support the Council achieve its carbon budget ambitions. She concluded by paying tribute to the officers involved in progressing this detailed, complex and important work on behalf of the Council.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/73 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

ECCNSC/23/74 Large Scale Renewable Energy Generation – Power Purchase Agreement (Part B - Press and Public Excluded)

The Committee considered the confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided details around the commercial, financial and legal arrangements in respect of the purchase of a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) as part of the Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generation Project to act as a key contributor to enable the Council to meet the Zero Carbon targets.

Officers were present to respond to Member's questions.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report before its submission to the Executive on 13 December 2023.

Decision

The Committee endorse the recommendations being asked of Executive, as set out in the report.