

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee – Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2019

Present:

Councillor Hughes (In the Chair)
Councillors Jeavons and Kilpatrick

Apologies: Councillors Reid and Wright

Also Present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Claire Benson, Littermum
Roxana Allison, Be Longsight
Anna Komoniecka, Litter Ambassador
Debbie Burton, Levenshulme Square Residents
Sue Hare, Chair of Community Guardians
Anne Tucker, Upping It

NESC/BCW/19/04 Minutes

The Chair enquired if any analysis had been undertaken to compare the cost incurred to remove fly tipping compared to reducing or removing the charge at recycling centres for commercial waste.

The Strategic Lead: Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services advised that an update on this would be provided following a period of mobilisation from 1 June 2019 as the new Greater Manchester Combined Authority waste disposal contract had been awarded.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019.

NESC/BCW/19/05 Discussion item: Examples of good practice

To help inform the deliberations and the final recommendations of the Group, Members had invited a number of residents groups to attend this meeting so that they could hear of their experiences in addressing waste and litter in their respective communities. This meeting provided an opportunity for Members to hear from; discuss with and share experiences of what residents had done to overcome any barriers they had faced to improving their neighbourhoods.

The Group welcomed a number of invited guests who had agreed to attend the meeting. The Chair invited each guest in turn to address the Members.

Claire Benson, Littermum and Litter Ambassador stated that she became passionate about tackling litter in her local community as she was appalled by the levels of this in her area. She established a Twitter group to connect with other local community groups and to highlight the issue and galvanise action to address general litter and litter associated with the construction industry. She further described that she had worked within her apartment block to engage with other residents to support recycling activity in her block, reporting that in the previous 6 months recycling had increased by 29%. She recommended that this could be replicated across all apartment blocks by engaging with property management companies to have a dedicated tenant/occupier recycling champion or building manager to support and drive this agenda. She further commented that this could also be supported by appropriate information regarding recycling arrangements being issued to tenants when they initially moved into an apartment. Members and guests commented that that this was feasible in apartment blocks with established, long term occupants, however the challenge arose in those apartments with a high turnover of tenants.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that he welcomed the increased recycling rates reported by Ms Benson, noting that this was a very significant achievement. He reported that he acknowledged the comment regarding the role of a recycling champion in apartment blocks and the positive impact this could have and consideration would be given as to how this could be progressed and rolled out further, with thought given to a possible incentive scheme for tenants to become a champion in their block.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration acknowledged the comment regarding the challenge due to turnover of tenants and stated that the housing market needed to be flexible, especially in the city centre however she had recently visited a new build site that was in development that would be let to the private rented sector, and the intention of this development would be to offer longer tenancies that would contribute to creating communities within blocks.

A Member further commented that the challenge had been to retrofit recycling facilities into existing apartment blocks and noted the progress that had been made to address this.

In regard to construction litter Ms Benson advised that she had actively engaged with contractors to get them to enter into a litter pledge that committed contractors to undertake regular sweeps to ensure any waste and litter associated with the construction site was collected and removed in a timely manner.

She further commented that in addition to the positive impact the work of her group contributed to the physical environment it also had an impact on people's mental health.

The Group then heard from Roxana Allison from Be Longsight who described that her group had developed, with the support of Upping It in response to the significant issue of fly tipping experienced in her local neighbourhood. She described that by working with local residents, engaging with the local primary school and with the support of local Members they had transformed an alley way. She described that the transformation of the alleyway had increased residents' pride in their area and helped

build positive relationships amongst neighbours. She further commented that the activity days delivered with the support of Active Streets had also had a positive impact on the local community. She stated that the benefits to the area was recognised by other residents and they were keen to replicate this in other alleyways and her group would support them to deliver this and help build community networks.

The Group were shown a video that had been produced to capture and document the work of the residents.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration paid tribute to the work of the group and their achievements, noting that it had not been easy for them and the success could be attributed to the dedication and determination of a core group of individuals.

Ms Allison described that a barrier they had experienced was engaging with, and obtaining the support of local businesses, however they would continue to work on this. She informed the Group that there were specific issues and concerns related to an individual business in the area. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised that he would ask Neighbourhood Officers to investigate the issues raised.

The Group then heard from Anna Komoniecka, Litter Ambassador who explained that she had established a Facebook group to advertise and promote litter picks and clean up events across Greater Manchester and she encouraged all Members of the Task and Finish Group to join the group and promote this whenever possible. She stated that the Facebook group had helped promote and link a network of groups across all generations that could help motivate each other, share information and experiences. She stated that the Keep Blackburn Tidy Group was a good example of this work and recommended that Members viewed their webpage.

A Member commented that it was important to recognise the role of the online community to support and drive this activity and consideration needed to be given as to how this could be supported further. The Chair commented upon the recent positive outcomes experienced in his ward following information sharing on a local community website.

The Group then heard from Debbie Burton from Levenshulme Square Residents who described the activities delivered in her local neighbourhood to address the issue of litter and develop community activity and awareness around this issue. She described that regular litter picks were organised and these were advertised with posters on communal gates and leaflets delivered to houses. She commented that street parties had been organised that had helped develop a sense of pride in the area which representatives of Biffa had attended to promote good practice around the issue of waste and recycling. She further informed the Group that a calendar of events had been designed and delivered to homes in the area that included information to promote the Council's bulky waste collection service. She stated that local events had also been organised around specific issues, such as the Beeline Network proposals and the popular local market was used to engage with residents and promote community events.

Ms Burton commented that despite their efforts they still experienced fly tipping in specific hotspots and suggested that consideration should be given to installing CCTV cameras to identify perpetrators and assist with any prosecutions. She stated that any prosecutions should then be reported in the local press to support the message that this antisocial behaviour would not be tolerated and the ambition should be to make littering and fly tipping socially unacceptable, in the same way as drink driving campaigns had influenced behaviour change and attitudes.

The Group then discussed the appropriateness of, and their individual experiences in directly challenging people who were witnessed littering, noting that personal safety should always be considered.

Guests reported that the online reporting system, especially when using a phone when out in the neighbourhood was problematic and caused frustration and requested that this system be reviewed to ensure it was fit for purpose.

The Strategic Lead (Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services) reported that the additional investment in Neighbourhood Services would allow for the use of CCTV to target fly tipping hotspots and options for this were being explored. She further acknowledged the comments regarding the online reporting system and advised that a new system would be introduced later this year and she was confident that this would address the reporting issues raised by the guests. A Member commented that it was important that the reporting system was appropriate to enable residents to confidently report any issues that they identified, further commenting that an analysis of the number of abandoned online reports be undertaken by officers.

The Group then heard from Sue Hare, Chair of Community Guardians who described her experience of living in a neighbourhood with a significant student population. She commented that a challenge they experienced was as a result of a transient population and the attitude of both students and private landlords to the local area. She described that residents had sought to influence local planning and licensing applications to improve the area, commenting that the area was now subject to a Cumulative Impact Policy. She said that they had also worked with the local Civic Society to restrict the number of family sized homes being converted into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and to retain the properties as family homes.

Ms Hare commented that improvements had been realised through a partnership approach developed with the local police and the Universities, that included University funded night time patrols to tackle student related anti-social behaviour. However, she believed the University needed to do more to promote and encourage social responsibility amongst their students living in neighbourhoods, noting the significant impact student house parties had on the area that resulted in noise, litter and damage. A Member commented that Universities should use Freshers Week to positively engage with students around this issue, suggesting that they would be more receptive to this message when they first arrived to study. The Strategic Lead (Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services) advised that they worked with the Universities and this suggestion would be relayed to them.

Ms Hare described that they had produced and delivered welcome leaflets that were distributed at the beginning of the academic year and her group had also

implemented relatively small, but important physical changes to the local area, such as the planting of flowers that have improved the appearance of the area, fostered a sense of pride and had provided an opportunity to engage with residents on the street who had stopped to speak. She said it was important to lead by example to influence behaviour change, however this was a challenge due to the regular turnover of students living in the area.

The Group then discussed the issue of waste generated at the end of the academic year when properties were emptied in preparation for new tenants. Members commented that more needed to be done to encourage the recycling of materials, and the upcycling of household goods. Ms Komoniecka stated that she had contacts with the Students Union who could support this and advertise any such scheme on their website. The Strategic Lead (Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services) further informed the Group that options for organising the collection of upcycled student household goods at the end of the academic year were being explored.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods noted the positive impact a welcome leaflet and friendly introduction could have to build relationships and generate a sense of community. He further noted the comments regarding the positive outcomes that could be achieved by upcycling student household equipment at the end of the academic year. He commented that if landlords fly tipped they would be investigated and prosecuted as it was completely unacceptable. The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration commented that the University had previously supported community payback schemes, whereby students would engage in litter picks and community clean ups. She stated that these had been very positive and had helped establish good relations between students and residents. She stated that community organisations were vital to influence behaviour change, build networks and resilience and local Councillors should actively engage with and support this activity.

The Group then heard from Anne Tucker from Upping It who described that the ethos of Upping It was to focus on solutions and what could be achieved to turn despair into positive actions. She recommended that regular and routine planning inspections needed to be undertaken post development to ensure that all of the required recycling facilities and management arrangements were in place and complied with. She further recommended that communications needed to be improved between waste operative teams to ensure contaminated container bins were emptied in a timely manner and a named contact at Biffa should be provided to resident groups. She further stated that issues had arisen when the extra black bin allocated to HMOs were not collected.

Ms Tucker further informed the Group of a piece of work that her group had undertaken to analyse car ownership in the Moss Side area. She reported that car ownership was low, however the roads during the day time period were fully occupied by parked vehicles from workers using these streets as car parking, adding that they often parked irresponsibly. She stated that this then had an impact on the ability of road sweepers being able to access the roads and footpaths to clean, and consideration needed to be given to this as this gave rise to the perception of the area being dirty but this was not the fault of the residents.

Ms Tucker commented that a significant issue could be attributed to commercial

waste and fly tipping and this needed to be addressed. The Strategic Lead (Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Services) advised that proactive work was ongoing to identify perpetrators of commercial waste fly tipping and to ensure that business had the correct waste management arrangements in place, commenting that enforcement action would be taken to address any deficiencies.

Ms Tucker informed the Group that she had submitted a list of recommended actions to address issues associated with students and student accommodation to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods for consideration.

Ms Tucker reported that a recent exhibition, Rubbish Night at the Museum, hosted at the University of Manchester had been very successful, informative and very well attended. She said that it was hoped that a similar event could be organised next year. She further commented on the positive impact that Patrick Hanfling, the local Neighbourhood Officer had played in developing and supporting community resilience in the Hulme area and she expressed her thanks for his continued commitment and hard work.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all of the invited speakers for their hard work, dedication and commitment and the positive contribution they had made to their neighbourhood and the city. He thanked them all for attending the meeting and contributing to the discussion. He advised that the content to this meeting would inform the Group's deliberations and inform the final recommendations of the Group.

Decision

To note the discussion.

NESC/BCW/19/06 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Task and Finish Group considered the terms of reference and future work programme and were invited to make any amendments.

Members noted that the Group would be re-established in the new municipal year and the date for the next meeting would be agreed, in consultation with the Chair and Members would be informed.

Decision

To approve the work programme and terms of reference.