

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2019

Present:

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Appleby, Butt, Flanagan, Harland, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Sadler, Whiston, White and Wright

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Stone, Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Apologies: Councillor Strong

NESC/19/19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019 were submitted for approval as an accurate record of the meeting. Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods requested that his attendance be recorded on the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019.

Decisions

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019 as a correct record subject to the above amendment.

To note the minutes of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group meeting of 20 March 2019.

NESC/19/20 Update on the work of the Section 21 team based within the Housing Solutions Team

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Adult Services that provided an update on the work of the newly created team in the Housing Solutions Service, whose role was to specifically focus upon supporting people who receive a Section 21 notice from their landlord to leave the accommodation.

The Strategic Lead for Homelessness referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Data on the levels of homeless presentations within Manchester;
- A description of Section 21 notices and the legal process;
- A description of the Court Service that was based in the Manchester Civil Justice Centre and the offer that they deliver;
- The new process for homeless applicants who present with a Section 21 notice;
- Outcomes of the Section 21 Team, noting that the team had been established for four months;

- Analysis of the financial impact of the Section 21 Team; and
- The outcome of this service was that more people were able to remain in their accommodation longer; were avoiding emergency accommodation and having more opportunity to access a property in the area of their choice.

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

- Had recent changes announced in relation to the Landlord Tenant Act 2012 had any impact on Section 21 procedures;
- How was the service publicised across the city;
- How many staff were employed in the Court Service and how many people do they see each month;
- What 'incentives' could be used by the team to help negotiate with landlords to prevent evictions;
- More information was sought on the dispersal of homeless families, noting the detrimental impact this had on families and children's education and requested that the report that was to be submitted to the July meeting include comparative data on the numbers affected by this and case studies be provided; and
- What follow up support was offered to residents who had engaged with the service.

The Section 21 Team Manager informed the Committee that the recent changes announced to the Landlord Tenant Act 2012 did not impact on Section 21 procedures. He advised that the team negotiated with landlords to prevent evictions, advising that in certain circumstances the prevention fund could be used to clear arrears up to an agreed amount on the understanding that the Section 21 notice would be withdrawn by the landlord. He also advised that the team would also apply for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) on behalf of tenants experiencing a shortfall in their Housing Benefit. He further advised that the prevention fund could also be used to pay a bond to secure a tenancy with a private landlord.

The Section 21 Team Manager stated that there was currently two full time staff employed within the Court Service and that they dealt with approximately 80 people per month, noting that the breakdown was approximately 85% social landlord tenants, 7.5% mortgage repossession cases and 7.5% private rented sector tenants. Commenting that mortgage lenders were required to inform the local authority when there was an intention to instigate repossession proceedings and this allowed appropriate referrals for support and assistance to be made.

The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that a mapping exercise had been undertaken in relation to factors that caused homelessness and analysis of these results would then inform targeted prevention work. She further stated that the recently appointed Director of Homelessness would be attending the July meeting to address the Committee.

The Deputy Leader stated that she supported the Government's commitment to end the use of Section 21 notices, but they now needed to focus upon enacting this. The Deputy Leader further advised that following a recent Peer Review of the use of DHP she remained committed to working with colleagues in the Revenues and

Benefit Unit to ensure that DHP was best used to maximise the number of residents supported.

The Strategic Lead for Homelessness stated that for those residents who engaged with the service, support was offered by making referrals to various sources such as the Citizens Advice Manchester, Shelter, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre and Early Help Hubs. In relation to the issue of dispersed families she acknowledged the comment made by the Member, however stated that due to the levels of demand on the service it was not always possible to find accommodation within Manchester.

The Strategic Lead for Homelessness informed the Committee that relevant Partners had been made aware of the Section 21 Team, and as the service was relatively new she wanted to be confident that it was working as intended before publicising more widely, however the intention was to do this and consideration would be given as to how best to do that.

The Chair commented that homelessness was a very complex issue, including but not restricted to mental health and domestic violence, and requested that the report that was scheduled to be submitted to the July meeting include information on how the Homeless Service worked with other services and partner organisations to address homelessness.

Decision

1. To recommend that the report entitled 'Update on Homelessness and Housing' that is scheduled for consideration by the Committee at the 17 July meeting include information and comparative data on dispersed families and case studies. In addition, the report will include information on how the Homeless Service worked with other services and partner organisations to address homelessness.

2. Noting the impact that dispersal had on homeless families and children's education the Committee recommend that the Executive Member for Children and Schools and representatives from Children's Services be in attendance at the July meeting.

NESC/19/21 Progress Report: Activities to Tackle Flytipping

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that provided Members with an update on the activities to tackle flytipping.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Providing a description of the teams that deliver the services that discharge the Council's statutory duties in respect of ensuring flytipping was removed from public land, protecting the environment and ensuring that businesses and residents comply with a range of legislation to ensure that waste was disposed of correctly;

- A description of the progress to date since the last report to the Committee in October 2018, including case studies;
- A description of the options for getting rid of waste;
- The responsibility of Biffa to respond to reports of fly-tipped waste on public land;
- The role of the Biffa Fly-tip Investigation Team and how they work with the Neighbourhood Project Compliance Team to pursue enforcement action;
- Performance against Service Level Agreements;
- Key flytipping statistics; and
- Next steps.

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

- What was the strategy to prevent flytipping across the whole of the city;
- Alleyways and passageways needed to be cleaned and weeded in conjunction with the highways department;
- Who had been involved with Great British Spring Clean and how would this link in with wider environmental campaigns across the city;
- Did Biffa operatives report incidents of flytipping that were left next to the household bins;
- Noting the number of prosecutions for flytipping was this satisfactory compared to the number of notices issued;
- What was being doing to address the increase in 'scrap man' advertising;
- Following discussions with Social Landlords consideration needed to be given as to how they could request bulky waste collections on the Council's CRM system;
- The bulky waste collection service needed to be advertised more widely and repeatedly and could a poster be made available to display in communal areas;
- Residents should still be able to request a bulky waste collection via other means, not just online.
- Noting the difficulties experienced in identifying private landowners and the challenges to remove flytipping from canals and rivers;
- The cost to businesses to dispose of waste at household waste recycling centres and was this counterproductive;
- CCTV needed to be utilised to identify and prosecute perpetrators of flytipping; and
- Could statistics be provided on the take up of the bulky waste collection service over the previous 12 months be provided at a ward level.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing acknowledged the comments expressed regarding the cleaning of alleyways and informed the Committee that Biffa were reviewing their approach to this with a view to improving the service. She said that a pragmatic approach would be adopted and the schedule would be reviewed and this would be shared with Members. She stated that a programme to invest in containers in passage ways would also be delivered this year.

In regard to bulky waste, the Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing confirmed that the data on bulky waste collections for the previous twelve months was available on a ward basis and this would be circulated to Members. She said this

service had been widely publicised as part of the apartment block service changes and consideration would be given as to how this could be promoted more widely. She said that residents could still request a bulky waste collection via other means in addition to online, and she noted the comments regarding the CRM system and the challenges experienced by Social Landlords when requesting bulky waste collections on behalf of their tenants. She further confirmed that Biffa crews did report incidents of flytipping when this was witnessed on their collection rounds and the appropriate teams would be deployed to remove this. She further advised that the approach to addressing flytipping was consistent across the city.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing acknowledged that delays in removing flytipped waste could be experienced when this occurred on private land, adding that access to remove flytipping could hamper removal. She said that complaints regarding incidents of this type would be dealt with by the local Neighbourhood Teams. She further advised that Keep Britain Tidy had undertaken a piece of research to understand why people flytipped and had provided a number of recommendations that were currently being reviewed and reflected upon. She said that the outcome of this exercise would be reported to the October meeting of the Committee.

In response to the comments regarding the cost to dispose of commercial waste at household recycling centres the Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing stated that commercial operators had a number of options available to them to dispose of their waste and such centres were for domestic waste, not commercial waste.

Responding to the issue of 'scrap men' the Strategic Lead, Compliance Enforcement & Community Safety noted that there had been an increase in such services advertised across the city. She said whilst it may appear to residents that this was a simple way to have their bulky items removed it was important to realise that residents were ultimately responsible for the appropriate disposal of any rubbish. She said that residents could be subject to a Household Duty of Care Fine of £400 if the carrier they used to remove and dispose of their waste was not licensed.

The Strategic Lead, Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety stated that the agreed additional investment in 2019/20 to tackle flytipping of £500k would be used to fund additional Enforcement Officers to undertake targeted work and to invest prevention measures, such as investing in CCTV cameras and target hardening projects to design out flytipping hotspots by installing physical measures to deter fly-tippers.

The Keep Manchester Tidy, Project Manager advised the all partners and groups that had taken part in the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean had registered via their website so the details of all of these groups had been collected. She said that all of the schools that had taken part would also be surveyed to understand the levels of participation and obtain feedback. She said that to build on the success of this and celebrate the work an event would be held at the Peoples History Museum on 25 June with all of the groups invited to attend. She said this would provide an opportunity to network and establish relationships between various community groups.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that Manchester remained committed to tackling the criminal activity of flytipping and this had been demonstrated by the additional funding that had been allocated to address this. He stated that Manchester took this issue very seriously and would actively investigate and prosecute perpetrators. He advised that Manchester was responsible for 10% of all persecutions nationally, stating that this was an achievement when considering that all cases were subject to the criminal burden of truth test. He further acknowledged the comments made regarding publicising the bulky waste collection service and consideration would be given as to how best to do this to maximise the take up of this offer.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Appleby declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as her partner is employed by Biffa]

NESC/19/22 Eco Schools

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that provided Members with information about the Eco Schools programme and the work currently being undertaken with young people in Manchester Schools.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Providing a description of the Eco Schools programme;
- Describing The Eco-Schools Seven Steps framework that participating schools follow in order to achieve the internationally recognised Eco-Schools Green Flag award; and
- Providing case studies to highlight the range of activities undertaken by Schools around this programme.

Members also viewed a video presentation that showcased the activities and learning undertaken by the pupils at the Dean Trust Ardwick around the issue of plastic waste and recycling.

The Committee also heard from the Neighbourhood Officer for the Hulme ward who described the variety of work undertaken with residents to support them to engage with environmental projects and activities, such as developing walking plans for schools, wildlife project, greening projects and air quality. The Chair paid tribute to the wealth of activities undertaken in the Hulme Ward that were supported by officers within the Neighbourhood Team. She commented that that this should be replicated across all wards to drive forward this important work and she thanked all of the schools, staff and pupils for their work.

The Committee welcomed the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee who said that he welcomed the report, noting the importance of engaging young people in this subject and that children could then influence the behaviour of adults. He stressed the important role of school governors to promote this work in their respective schools and he has raised this issue with the relevant Executive Member.

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

- Could a list of all schools and partners engaged in this programme be circulated;
- Noting that young people were taking the initiative in relation to the climate change agenda and they should be supported by the Council at every opportunity, for example using Section 106 money to plant trees and create green walls; and
- The importance of linking these activities into other related projects such as the zero carbon activities.

The Keep Manchester Tidy, Project Manager advised that Keep Britain Tidy organised a variety of events and deliver a number of projects throughout the year and that the Eco Schools programme was available to all schools. She advised that 202 schools and early years providers had registered as Eco-Schools in Manchester since 2005. She commented that an audit of school's progress against this programme would be undertaken and this would help understand any barriers. She commented that challenges were experienced when schools experienced staff turnover, and a member of staff who led on this activity left.

The Keep Manchester Tidy, Project Manager further advised that a list of partners was being collated by the Manchester Climate Change Agency.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing advised Members that the Litter Assemblies offered by Biffa were available to all schools and a list of those schools that had taken up this offer would be circulated. She further commented that the Social Value element of the Councils procurement policy would help support communities and neighbourhoods deliver environmental projects.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that he welcomed the opportunity to work with Keep Britain Tidy to support young citizens in this important area of work, noting that budget restrictions had impacted significantly on the ability to deliver and support this work.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To request a list of all schools engaged with the Eco Schools Programme is circulated to Members of the Committee.
3. To request a list of those schools that had received a Litter Assembly is circulated to Members of the Committee.
4. To request a list of all partners engaged with the Eco Schools Programme is circulated to all Members of the Committee.

NESC/19/23

Re-establishment of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered the report of Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit that provides the Committee with the current terms of reference and work programme of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group.

The Committee were invited to re-establish the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group for the municipal year 2019-2020, agree the membership and agree the terms of reference and work programme.

Decisions

1. The Committee agree to re-establish the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group for the municipal year 2019-2020;
2. The Committee approve the membership of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group as listed within the report and agree to appoint Cllr Whiston as an additional member.

NESC/19/24

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 invited the Committee to review the Work Programme and to inform her and the Scrutiny Support Officer of any specific areas that needed to be included in any of the reports listed.

A Member commented that there were a number of responses to recommendations still outstanding. The Chair advised that the Scrutiny Support Officer would follow these up for a response.

A Member commented that following conclusion of the Behaviour Change and Waste Task and Finish Group consideration should be given to establishing a Task and Finish Group to look at the issue of climate change.

Decision

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