

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 11 July 2019

PRESENT: Councillors: Blacker (Chair), Anjum, Ball, Burke, Conlan, Costigan, Dhadwal, *Donnelly* (Substituted for D. Crawford), Driscoll, Rice, Rooney, Shaw, A. Stafford (Vice-Chair), Woodroffe and Young.

Officers Present:

Jo Mortensen	- Sustainability Programme Manager
Anna-Marie Rattray	- Scrutiny Review Officer
Lucy Taylor	- Director of Regeneration and Planning
Lee Teasdale	- Democratic Services Officer

Other Attendees:

Steve Paynter	- Ealing Transition Initiative
Trevor Sharman	- Ealing Transition Initiative
Grant Venner	- Ealing Transition Initiative

1. Apologies for Absence
(Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Daniel Crawford was substituted at the meeting by Councillor Donnelly

2. Urgent Matters
(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Declarations of Interest
(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Matters to be Considered in Private
(Agenda Item 4)

There were none.

5. Minutes (16.05.19) & (06.06.19)
(Agenda Item 5)

Members were asked to consider the minutes of the meetings which had taken place on 16th May and 6th June 2019.

Regarding the minutes of 6th June, reference was made to item 7. Members asked that it be made clear that they sought a fuller response from officers on the recommendation from the Housing Panel highlighting pepper potting concerns.

Resolved – That subject to the above amendment to the minutes of 6th June 2019, the minutes of 16th May and 6th June 2019 be agreed by the Committee.

6. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability** (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited Jo Mortensen (Sustainability Programme Manager) and Lucy Taylor (Director of Regeneration and Planning), together with three representatives of the Ealing Transition Initiative - Trevor Sharman, Steve Paynter & Grant Venner, to make a presentation to the Committee following the Council's passing of a motion in April 2019 declaring a climate emergency. The presentation would allow members the opportunity to contribute to the wider discussion on Ealing's response to the climate emergency and the commitment to draw up policies that would achieve a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The presentation highlighted some of the key causes of climate change and the reasons why governments needed to start acting at the highest levels now to combat its progression. Evidence from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) pulled together from evidence provided by over 200 scientists had shown that if action was not taken now, then the ability to stop catastrophic effects would be severely hampered, and that the costs of proactive work now would be considerably less than the costs of reactive work once the impacts of climate change began to fully embed.

At the April 2019 meeting of the Full Council, Ealing's members had agreed to the declaration of a climate emergency which included the promise to '**Aim to make Ealing carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions**'.

Ealing therefore needed to consider how it could impart its greatest influence locally in combating climate change. Five initial areas of local influence and impact had been established, these were:

- Energy – Efficiency & Renewables
- Waste – Food Waste & Consumerism
- Transport – Reducing Car Use & Flying
- Food Systems – Local Options
- Green Space – Carbon Capture & Biodiversity

Work on energy consumption and production would include the need to reduce on-site combustion for heating homes, businesses and water through improving efficiency or reducing carbon intensity of fuel. Some of the current performance in this area was welcome as a starting point – there had been 1,173 domestic installations of solar PV power (which also powered 500 council homes) in the borough, which meant Ealing stood as the 5th highest in London at present. 10 schools had been fitted with solar panels through community energy partnerships. An

LED street lighting programme had also resulted in the saving of 50% on energy usage and costs.

Best influence on waste and consumerism would require the influencing of product design and consumer behaviours, including reduction of consumption of cheap nondurable goods and the reduction of food waste. Ealing had a high recycling rate (the second highest in London) and had food and garden waste collection services. Fortnightly collections of waste were in place now, which did contribute to the reduction of vehicle movements and emissions.

In regard to transport, there was a need to reduce the miles driven and to continue to oppose airport expansions. It was expected that over 130 electric vehicle charging points would be in place in the borough by May 2019, parking charges were being made commensurate with the level of vehicle emissions, cycle library & cargo bike hire schemes were in place and over 12,000 cycle training sessions had taken place in the borough since 2009.

Food represented 25% of the UK's carbon footprint, so addressing food systems was vital. From a wider perspective people needed to eat everything they bought, encourage local and ethical sourcing, avoid air freight and contribute to the reduction of meat, dairy and intensive farming. Ealing needed to encourage the creation of more orchards, estates and community gardens as it was currently ranked 25th on London's Good Food league table. There were several food redistribution organisations that had hubs in Ealing, and the borough also had a thriving allotment scene.

High quality, climate resilient green spaces needed to be maintained in the borough, with plans for carbon storage and biodiversity, and tree canopies needed to be protected and enhanced for cooling and biodiversity. £830k had been spent on the River Brent restoration project with Thames 21, there were now 21 Green Flag parks in the borough as well as 234,400 trees, which stored 76,000 tonnes of carbon. 200,000 square metres of wildflower meadows had been sown in 2019, which would store 60 tonnes of carbon and a 3-year tree planting partnership 'Trees for Cities' was taking place, which was a local authority first.

Questions

The Chair thanked the Sustainability Programme Manager for the introductory presentation and invited some initial questions from Committee Members.

Councillor Burke asked if more information could be given on how the work being done joined up between different areas.

It was advised that conversations between different areas were beginning and potential linkages were starting to form. The Local Plan was being updated to reflect the intentions in this area.

Councillor Burke welcomed the comments and suggested that Councillors could also look at how they could work in alignment to contribute to the project.

Councillor Donnelly asked about the benchmarking used to establish Ealing's 'London position' in terms of solar panel installation and the Good Food league table

for example. Was 5th in London on solar panels to be considered a good thing or somewhat disappointing? And was Ealing doing well against 'like-for-like' boroughs and making the most of what it had at its disposal? He also asked if trends had been seen around solar panels. When subsidising for solar panel installation had been removed, had there been a drop-off in uptake?

It was stated that benchmarking was quite tough within this field. Tier one carbon emissions had needed to be monitored by authorities for the last 8 years, so these figures could be compared, but there would always be a challenge given the very different estates each authority contained, meaning that direct benchmarking was not necessarily the best approach.

With regards to solar panel installation a local supplier had managed to maintain their level of business even after the dropping of subsidies. However, the government policy that resulted in the subsidies had been helpful and made the costs involved accessible to many more people.

The Chair suggested that the Committee could ask for a commitment that the Council be as open as possible on making emission data available.

Councillor Anjum spoke about behaviours around consumerism. What was the Council finding most challenging around this? What was the level of engagement, and were there incentives to residents?

It was advised that the bi-weekly collections of waste had significantly helped with carbon reduction. It had initially been a painful transition period but in the longer term it has and would continue to seriously help. A massive improvement had also been seen in recycling rates, which now stood at over 50%. This also contributed to proving that habits could be changed.

The increased uptake of electric vehicles was considered as a step in the right direction. However, studies had found that brake dusts from all vehicles were creating huge microparticle problems, so driving, no matter what the fuel type was polluting. Therefore, there was a pressing need for a big mental shift around not using cars within local communities. 1/3 of car trips were thought to be less than 2km, people needed to "get out of this habit" and start walking for trips that could be done within 15 minutes on foot.

Councillor Alex Stafford made reference to garden waste. Until 2010 this service had been offered free of charge. Was it found that this service was now used less than it had been?

It was advised that the data was not available to hand, however, home composting was promoted wherever possible and it reduced the vehicle traffic pollution caused by collections. Home composter kits have been made available to all residents who requested them.

Councillor Costigan stated that residents in Islip Manor were supposed to get replacement bin sheds which has not happened to date, with all waste still going into a big silver bin at the moment, despite many of them wanting to recycle waste. Making recycling options open to all residents should be at the core of these projects.

It was advised that these were being gradually rolled out, but there were still issues around space availability in some locations. There were also seem issues around contamination and misuse which needed to be further addressed.

Councillor Rooney asked about work being undertaken with local schools to spread the important messages.

Grant Venner of Ealing Transition Initiative was invited to answer the question. He advised that an initiative was ongoing to put solar panels on schools in the borough, with a 12th school having just signed up that day. Members of the community had invested in the installation of these panels, with around £0.5 million having been invested to date, these panels in turn then help to cut energy costs to the schools as well. Where the panels had been installed they appeared to have had a galvanising effect upon the staff. One school in Southall had seen students encouraged to write climate campaigning letters to Michael Gove MP, and a Perivale school had held a car-free day. Strong anti-plastic campaigns were also being shared. It was felt that there was a lot of good practice taking place in individual schools that could be shared and developed further together.

The Chair then invited representatives from Ealing Transition Initiative to address the panel on the range of their work. It was advised that they formed part of the transition towns movement, which was now active in over 50 countries. Its purpose was to allow local communities to facilitate the transition towards being a sustainable community. A document had been created to highlight the Initiatives concerns around actually achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The document time travelled to a 2030 in which all the ambitions had been achieved, and then looked backwards at what had needed to be done to meet these ambitions. It was evident that rapid far-reaching and unprecedented levels of change in all parts of society would be required. To be carbon-neutral within 11 years was more of a challenge than many may realise, and actions would need to be taken that were commensurate to the scale of the challenge. In this scenario, simply benchmarking against what others were doing would not be sufficient – only through real engagement with communities would change happen, the Council needed to be tapping into the ‘powerful tool’ that an engaged community could provide.

Jo Mortensen then asked that the Committee take part in a 20-minute exercise in which they were asked to come up with a wide-ranging series of possibilities for radically approaching the five areas initially highlighted.

(The outcomes from the exercise are included as an appendix to these minutes)

The Chair asked Lucy Taylor and Jo Mortensen to inform the Committee about possible next steps.

Lucy Taylor stated that closing some roads and pushing harder for segregated cycling lanes would send strong messages about the importance of changing habits, however presently these would still be a tough sell, and it would take a lot of political will to implement them. Councillors would also play an important role when it came to planning policy, how far would Members wish the Council to go in challenging developers for example.

Jo Mortensen advised that next steps would include testing the ideas suggested by Councillors and members of staff, putting them through the 'carbon filter' to whittle them down. Further engagement would be key, with partners and the public. It was intended that the resulting sustainability policy would be taken to Cabinet in October 2019. This made for quite an expedited process, being six months after the Council had initially declared a climate emergency. It would also mean that the policy might be somewhat "rough and ready" at that stage, but it was vital to move on this straight away.

Councillor Woodroffe noted that two schools were being built in the borough. Were advanced talks taking place on installing solar panels on these from the outset?

Ealing Transition Initiative stated that it had been much easier to engage with council schools, but they were happy to talk to any providers on solutions.

Councillor Costigan asked if a single page guidance sheet on the solar panel approach in schools could be provided, to help with easier guidance and understanding for school governors that stripped out the technicalities and allowed for a layman's understanding of the benefits.

Ealing Transition Initiative stated that such a guidance sheet could be prepared, they were also happy to come out and speak at school governor meetings to address concerns.

The Chair stated that there needed to be a culture change within the Council as well. A recent report on the postal room service in the Council stated that there were no environmental factors when clearly there would be. Officers needed to really start considering the wider environmental picture.

Councillor Driscoll stated that Councillors would also need to take on a political activist role, considering what the Council was going to change, and in turn getting other councils to coalesce around the policies.

The Chair drew the item to a close, thanking officers for their contributions and stating that Committee Members looked forward to seeing the sustainability policy once available.

Resolved: That

- (i) the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Briefing be received by the Committee; and
- (ii) statistics on the levels of residential usage of the garden waste service, pre and post 2010 be fed back to the Committee if available.

7. Final Report of Scrutiny Panel 4 2018/19 (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Costigan introduced the final report of Scrutiny Panel 4 (Future Ealing) to the Committee before it was sent on to Cabinet.

Questions

Councillor Woodroffe noted that no response had been provided on recommendation 32. It was advised that this would be chased up.

Resolved: That the Committee agrees the final report of Scrutiny Panel 4 (Future Ealing) be sent on to Cabinet, following the inclusion of an answer to recommendation 32.

8. The Work of the Panels (Agenda Item 8)

The first Scrutiny Review Panel of the year (SRP1 – Education) had met the previous week and been provided with an overview of school provision in the borough.

The Committee were also asked to approve the Scrutiny Annual Report which would be sent on to Full Council.

Resolved: That

- (i) the latest work of the panels update be noted; and
- (ii) the Scrutiny Annual Report be approved for sending to Full Council

9. OSC Work Programme (Agenda Item 9)

It was advised that Mark Wiltshire would be invited to provide the latest update on fire safety in Council housing and other residential buildings at the November 2019 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted by the Committee.

10. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 10)

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 8 August 2019, pending call-in's. If any call-in's were made, the Parking Strategy would also be brought to the meeting.

Councillor Josh Blacker, Chair.

The meeting ended at 8:55pm.
