

## **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

# **SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE**

**1400 hours on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Online Meeting – Actions**

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**Present:**

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Muhammad Afzal, Eddie Freeman, Timothy Huxtable and Julie Johnson

**Also Present:**

Cllr Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources

Cllr John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene & Parks

Cllr Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment

Cllr Paul Tilsley

Cllr Julien Pritchard

Ian MacLeod, Interim Director, Inclusive Growth

Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager, Environmental Protection

Guy Chaundy, Housing Modernisation & Partnership Manager

Amit Bratch, Principal Energy & Sustainability Officer

Fay Holland, Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFOE)

John Nightingale – Footsteps

Chris Martin - Footsteps

Richard Hatcher, West Midlands Climate Action Network

Ginnie Wollaston, Jai Jagat 2020 UK

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

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### **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised those present that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site and that Members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Olly Armstrong and Zaker Choudhry.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES**

The action notes of the meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September were agreed.

Cllr Huxtable referred to the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan that was discussed at the last meeting with Cllr Zaffar and it was agreed that a further update would be provided to Committee on the draft proposals that had not been subject to the normal consultation process. Cllr Zaffar agreed to attend a future meeting to update members on schemes that have been implemented as part of tranche 1 and proposals for tranche 2 following funding confirmation from Government.

## **5. DISCUSSION ON THE COUNCIL'S CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

The Chair welcomed all attendees and explained the purpose of the item following the report to City Council earlier in the month where a debate was held. Cllr Clements explained that campaign groups in the city had undertaken a lot of lobbying and some representatives of these groups were in attendance today to raise their key priorities in relation to the development of an action plan over the coming months.

Cllr Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment highlighted the work of the R20 taskforce, and the lessons learned. An amended motion agreed at City Council has set a target for the Council to bring back a fully costed action plan and meet the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This needs to be completed and presented to City Council by the end of the year. Members of the Executive and senior officers have met to discuss this further with the emphasis on seeing all operations of the Council through a climate change lens and a shift in the way of working to ensure that the commitment can be met.

During the discussion the following key points were made: -

- Fay Holland, BFOE explained that the two main areas that will make the greatest impact in lowering carbon emissions are in tackling energy sources and retrofitting of homes although it was acknowledged that not all of this was in the gift of the Council however there is a substantial impact on people's quality of life and wellbeing. The importance of enhancing nature in the city and the value of parks during the pandemic was also highlighted.
- John Nightingale and Chris Martin, Footsteps stated the need for more collaborative working especially with non-Council members of the R20 taskforce and councillors.

Communication and engagement were also key especially in putting an implementation plan in the public domain, for example, so that residents can access a website that could be continually updated with what is happening across the city. It was added that a designated officer to whom submissions can be sent would be helpful.

- Richard Hatcher, West Midlands Climate Action Network explained that climate change issues affect every aspect of the Council's work and should therefore be on the agenda of every scrutiny committee examining what policies are needed and the effect. In addition, more conversation was needed on climate issues and one way of doing this would be to hold ward forum meetings online to discuss policy and hear residents' views. Another key aspect was jobs and in the current climate the focus should be on the creation of new green jobs targeting school leavers in particular and providing them with the support and training needed to access these opportunities. The Council could also investigate if a commission of representatives of schools, further education institutions and employers could be set up to identify sectors at risk and growth sectors. In addition, the city could provide a co-ordinated system of support on skills and training for young people.
- Ginnie Wollaston, Jai Jagat 2020 UK identified reducing food waste at source and recycling as key priorities for the Council to tackle. It was highlighted that 50-60% of waste going to the Tyseley Energy for Waste plant is biodegradable and that with the current low levels of recycling the city wasn't going to be able to achieve lower carbon emissions. A programme of learning for residents is needed so that they understand how their waste can be recycled and its impact. There is also an opportunity for partnership working on this with supermarkets in relation to reducing food waste.

The following responses were made by officers and councillors to the points raised:

- Submissions to the Council should be sent directly to Ian MacLeod, Acting Director, Inclusive Growth to coordinate with his team.
- In respect to issues relating to the retrofitting of housing it was clarified that this is at the heart of the Economic Recovery Strategy that is due to be published next week and includes the creation of green jobs and infrastructure. Obtaining funding for this by the end of the year is a challenge and work is underway with partners to try and meet this.
- Cllr Clements felt that the use of ward forums was a powerful suggestion especially as there is the opportunity to use online meetings to reach a wider audience. The suggestion on targeting school leavers about green jobs is positive and will be relayed to the Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing.
- The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) have responsibility for jobs and the Leader of the Council has been talking to the WMCA about a jobs taskforce including greater support for the green economy.
- Cllr O'Shea echoed the importance of green space and parks during the pandemic and the work planned to increase recycling that has been delayed this year however the Council is working with the Keep Britain Tidy campaign to improve recycling.

- Work on improving recycling is being driven by the data held and this is being used to increase resources and focus on parts of the city that require additional work. Changes to how current items are dealt with in the waste process are expected (such as collection of food waste, glass and plastic return schemes) however funding will be required to support the city with this from government. There is also a need to ensure that a future waste disposal contract includes managing the collection and disposal of food waste.
- The city is looking at a number of options as part of a future contract that will set a course for waste disposal following the end of the current contract in 2024.
- Cllr Chatfield explained that the process of procurement within the Council is there to support and not choose what product is purchased. It is imperative therefore to understand the carbon impact of what is purchased, and this needs to be mainstreamed as 'business as usual'. As part of this available data needs to be used to identify areas where carbon output is excessive to tackle effectively and make a difference. Energy usage in housing is clearly the biggest challenge and huge investment is needed but needs to be prioritised.
- Guy Chaundy, Housing Modernisation & Partnership Manager explained that housing is a key priority for the action plan. This includes work on the existing council stock and around the capital investment programme to achieve greater fuel efficiency through a replacement programme (window and wall replacement) aimed at the worst buildings such as high rises. There is also a need to balance this with fire and building safety which is another key demand.
- Another key area is assessment of private sector housing and making best use of data through a private sector stock condition survey that would allow for analysis on the scope, scale and cost of identifying and retrofitting of certain types of property and identifying areas in the city that need targeting. This type of survey would also be useful to the Council's own stock but does need funding and a targeted resource. This is being worked on through a dedicated officer post and exploring further the recent announcement on social housing through the Green Homes Fund. Furthermore, the Fuel Poverty and Financial Inclusion Partnership chaired by Cllr John Cotton is working with Public Health to deliver work on how people can afford to heat their homes efficiently. This needs to be captured as part of the action plan with the right representation in delivery and oversight.
- Members agreed the need for continuous cross party working in this area as progress had been slower than anticipated and to raise the priority level both at officer level and politically. Better engagement with all partners in the taskforce is also needed. A cross party advisory group to the Cabinet is due to be set up to help guide the work on climate change.
- Cllr Clements reiterated that the Council had agreed to tackling climate change as the 6<sup>th</sup> key priority in the Council Plan and the need for members to continue challenging service areas on what steps they are taking to achieve the targets being set.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The Chair thanked all attendees for their participation and commitment to the agenda.

## **6. WASTE DISPOSAL CONTRACT – UPDATE**

Cllr John O'Shea explained that as the Council was in the negotiation phase details that could be shared in a public forum were limited due to commercial confidentiality.

Members raised the need for flexibility in the contract as targets and changes come on board in areas such as the disposal of food waste, air quality and decarbonisation.

Concerns were raised about the amount of waste produced by the city that doesn't get processed at the Tyseley plant and leaves the city. An example of good practice such as the Copenhill plant in Copenhagen was shared which procures feedstock to convert into energy all year round and receives a reliable stream of waste.

Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene reconfirmed the aim of the whole process is to reduce waste going to incineration from households, increase recycling and to get more out of the feedstock going into the Tyseley plant. He added that this provides an opportunity through policy decision making to move alternative waste into the plant instead of moving it out of Birmingham. Currently household waste collection is 20% of the total waste produced and the Council wants to work with partners to identify where that waste is going and where best it can be processed in the future. The long-term aim is to reduce the total amount of waste being produced by taking out all recycle at source and so the amount being sent to landfill or incineration is far less.

### **RESOLVED: -**

1. A copy of the relevant papers discussed at the Committee's February meeting to be sent to John Nightingale.

## **7. PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION: PLASTIC FREE BIRMINGHAM INQUIRY**

(See document No.7)

Darren Share updated the Committee on the progress made in implementing the recommendations as set out in the tracking report.

It was noted that much of the work was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic especially in terms of officer resource and support however progress was being made wherever possible and this included working with partners including WRAP on a communications campaign to improve recycling and the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. A new recycling leaflet has been developed for residents showing what can and can't be recycled and is a more visual document. This has been reviewed externally and the aim is to get it onto the Council's website shortly followed by the distribution of a printed leaflet to households.

The Council has also been looking at good practice from elsewhere including Leeds and the Council's Event Organiser's Guide discourages the use of single use plastics at

events with a separate recycling option for plastics if they are used. The use of balloons and Chinese lanterns across all council land has been banned.

The planned Plastic Free Summit has been rescheduled to take place in 2021. Discussions on collections are ongoing with Veolia as they have a wide range of experience in recycling different types of material including hard plastics and that is something that the Council is investigating further as is the recycling of mattresses.

In further discussion with members it was clarified that: -

- Due to the emergency response to Covid-19 senior officers have had to prioritise their time to this effort, and this has impacted other work areas.
- Locating water dispensers in council buildings did start however this was put on hold as buildings closed due to the pandemic. This will be picked up as buildings reopen. The Council will also work with partners to consider water dispenser facilities in buildings that are public facing.
- Progress has not been made on the inclusion of a plastic free aisle with supermarkets however examples of where this has been implemented in shops has been investigated.
- There are some interesting plastic free businesses across the city and delivery services e.g. the Clean Kilo supermarket and it is important to ensure that the Council engages with the voluntary sector when the summit is rescheduled as they have knowledge, resources and time that the city does not.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The report was noted.
2. Recycling leaflet to be shared with all Councillors for comment before going being finalised.
3. Darren Share to provide clarification on what has been included in the City Council Event Organisers Guide on the use of single-use plastic where events are being held on Council-owned land in respect to Recommendation 4 (1).

## **8. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION**

(See document No. 8)

Mark Wolstencroft explained that the consultation was open for comment between 25<sup>th</sup> September - 1<sup>st</sup> November. The following points were highlighted: -

- The Council has a duty to respond when the legal limit is exceeded. The main problem in Birmingham is the nitrogen dioxide caused by the levels of traffic.
- The introduction of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) will address air pollution in the city centre however there is a need to address levels of poor air quality beyond this.
- There have been developments since the last action plan in 2011. These include changes to road networks, urban landscape especially fringes of the city centre and changes to vehicle fleet (in terms of emissions) and therefore it has been necessary to revisit outputs to see if assumptions made at the time

are still relevant. Consultants have been engaged to do this work (and have previously conducted the modelling work for the CAZ which gives consistency).

The following comments were then made in discussion with the Committee: -

- The University of Birmingham has worked closely with rail operators to monitor air pollution at New Street station. The station has taken on additional measures and has an action plan in place. The Council is not responsible in this case as the pollution created is within a building however if emissions on platforms leak out into the air then it is an issue for the city. There should be an impact on air quality levels as some train stock is shifted to electrification.
- Pollution levels created by the incineration of waste at the Tyseley Energy from Waste plant are regulated by the Environmental Agency. A permit system is in place with strict regulations on emission limits that are closely monitored.
- The impact of decreased traffic on pollution levels due to the pandemic will be known by the end of the year in terms of data in comparison with the annual mean. Further details are on the Council's website where data is available and can be circulated.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The report was noted.
2. Website details for access to data on air quality and links to historic data/current data from real time stations to be provided. Further information can be accessed via <https://bit.ly/2SOEK2e>

**9. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document No. 9)

The Chair outlined items for discussion at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The work programme was noted.

**10. DATE OF MEETINGS**

Noted.

**11. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS (IF ANY)**

None.

**12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

Agreed.

#### **RESOLVED: -**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 16:01 hours.