

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 14th February 2019, Committee Room 2 – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors David Barrie, Kath Hartley, Chaman Lal, and Hendrina Quinnen.

Also Present:

Michael Addison, ecobirmingham

Haydn Brown, Procurement

Neil Carney, Programme Director - Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

Libby Harris, Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFOE)

Ben Lee, Plastic Free Moseley

Tom Pell, The Clean Kilo Supermarket

Chris Neville, Acting Director, Regulation & Enforcement

John Newson, Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFOE)

Darren Share, Assistant Director, Waste Management

Jeanette Wong, The Clean Kilo Supermarket

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

Rose Kiely, Overview & Scrutiny Manager

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 Timothy Huxtable and Zaker Choudhry.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S ACTION NOTES

The action notes of 8th and 10th January 2018 were agreed.

5. PLASTIC FREE BIRMINGHAM INQUIRY

(see document pack)

The Chair, Cllr Liz Clements welcomed attendees to the second evidence gathering session and outlined the background and purpose of the Inquiry. Attendees were invited to talk to the Committee about the work that they are involved in in reducing the use of plastic materials and specifically any initiative to reduce the use of (SUPs). Invitees were encouraged to take part in and add to the wider discussion with Members.

John Newson, BFOE explained that the main source of plastic waste is through food and drinks packaging. Fast food outlets in particular are a big user of SUPs and this creates a huge waste management problem. Businesses are not paying for the additional burden placed on local authorities to collect. He added that it would be better to regulate in the manufacturing of packaging so that it stops the problem from arising in the first place. There is also a need to provide packaging alternatives that in the past were used and worked well.

It was highlighted that Birmingham has one the lowest recycling rates in the country in comparison with other local authority areas meaning that more is being put into residual waste bins.

He added that recycling facilities need to be improved for all properties to encourage people to recycle their waste. Currently 79% of household refuse is incinerated or sent to landfill which in turn means higher costs to the Council in disposal. It was highlighted that some residents do not understand what to put in the recycling bins and what happens to it after and so don't bother to recycle their waste. Previously the Council ran a 'nectar points' scheme to encourage people to recycle. An incentive scheme would help to increase recycling levels. There is also a need for the Council to look to introduce a household food waste scheme.

Darren Share, Waste Management clarified that food waste is a significant proportion of the waste collected by the Council and is approximately in the region of 38-48%. There are many local authorities that do collect food waste. There is a government consultation paper on the collection of food waste with a number of options including a separate weekly collection. However cost is the key issue and it will require funding if the Council considers any possible schemes in the future.

John Newson added that there are some good examples of sustainable businesses and those actively reducing plastic waste in the city for example the Clean Kilo supermarket the first zero waste supermarket in the city; the University of

Birmingham has a re-useable coffee cup scheme, Boston Tea Party café was the first café to ban SUP cups and also only provide paper straws on request.

Ben Lee, Plastic Free Moseley (PFM) spoke to the Committee about the work that his organisation is involved in with businesses in Moseley. He explained that the 'plastic free' project was started in spring 2018 and that they are working with businesses and community groups to get them to reduce SUPs and waste and move towards achieving 'plastic free' status. There are 5 objectives that have to be worked through to achieve the status. Café 'Saparo de Sole' in Moseley has achieved 'plastic free' status and is given as an example of good practice on the Surfers Against Sewage website.

He confirmed that many of the businesses in the area have already started initiatives to reduce the use of plastic and with some encouragement can take the next few steps. The barriers that some are facing is the cost in providing alternatives however PFM recommend that as a first step businesses reduce the amount they use, educate their staff on reducing the use of plastic and promote re-use where possible. In terms of alternatives promoted caution was given on the use of bio-plastics (instead of SUPs). There is a lack of awareness on how bio-plastics are made (differently as plant made rather than oil made as normal plastics are) however if the resource is not available to recycle these then they can end up in landfill and have the same timeframe as normal plastics in terms of the time it takes for them to decompose.

It is important to note that as individuals within communities become more sustainably aware there are the opportunities to take action to effect change such as setting up 'plastic free communities' and demand changes as consumers in the use of plastic packaging that businesses will act on and take note. The key is if enough businesses make change it encourages others to follow suit.

Jeanette Wong and Tom Pell founders of the Clean Kilo supermarket addressed the Committee on the work of eliminating SUPs in their business. They explained that their business ethos is to eliminate the use of plastic packaging/SUPs not only in the sale of goods but in how they are delivered by suppliers SUP's (where possible). Furthermore they also source goods as locally as possible in keeping with their sustainable philosophy.

To date the supermarket has carried out 11,000 transactions and has received a 25% increase in the number of visitors since November 2018. Local support has been good and shoppers have commented on the 'interactive and fun' nature of the shop. This was described as a 'feel good' factor and increased the footfall on the high street where it is located in Digbeth. Media coverage has also been positive and has increased the awareness of plastic pollution. They further commented on the two major threats to the environment as global warming and plastic pollution.

It was noted that in 2017 there was only 1 zero waste shop and there are now 50 shops in the country in addition to on-line shops offering pantry goods. The demand and supply nature of zero waste shopping was highlighted and that as people change their shopping behaviour and it becomes the norm it allows them to be more prepared to shop in this way (for example in bringing re-useable containers to purchase goods).

To support this further there is a need for the Government and Council to support zero waste supermarkets to flourish and this could be through introducing financial incentives such as money off shopping if re-usable containers are used thereby encouraging customers to shop there.

Further suggestions of good practice that the Council could incorporate were shared with the Committee including:

- undertaking an audit of its buildings to assess items that can be eliminated to reduce plastic waste;
- providing information in schools on plastic containers and cutlery to raise awareness of the pollution issue; and
- undertaking an audit of specific bins on the public highway to help identify problems of escaping litter on footways that makeup much of the plastic in the waste stream. This would enable more targeting to be done in specific areas and with businesses where appropriate.

Michael Addison, ecobirmingham spoke to Members about the role of his organisation in promoting sustainability and outlined its priorities as:-

- reducing air pollution;
- reducing the use of fossil fuels; and
- reducing the impact on the planet.

He outlined the 'Refill' Birmingham project as a national initiative to reduce the number of plastic bottles in the waste stream. Currently the UK uses about 13 billion plastic bottles per year and 7 billion of these are bottled water.

Ecobirmingham are the local champion for the 'Refill Birmingham' campaign working with a number of partners on the initiative to help bring about systemic change. The initiative aims to reduce plastic pollution at source by making it easier for people to reuse and refill their bottles with free tap water 'on the go' therefore reducing the number of plastic bottles in the waste stream.

They are working with Severn Trent and a Memorandum of Understanding with Birmingham City Council is in place to get refill water stations in the city in 2019. A phone 'app' is also being made available so that people can navigate places nearest to them to fill up their containers whilst 'on the go'. There are 145 water stations planned in Birmingham. An action day will take place on 19th March where volunteers will be present in Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) areas across the city, signing up businesses to become 'Refill' stations on the 'Refill app'.

Further ideas were shared with the Committee aimed at involving communities and residents in eliminating and reducing plastic waste. The key issue to be tackled was noted as stopping waste at source and educating residents. It was highlighted that the Council's procurement, planning, licensing and enforcement areas can help support this. For example shoe covers made from plastic used in Council run or owned leisure centres could be eliminated and the Council could use its influence and move towards a more zero tolerance approach on this. There are various ways to tackle such issues and local ideas can be 'scaled up' to be used across the city to affect the pace of change.

Darren Share, Waste Management clarified the work that the Council is doing in respect of the collection and disposal of plastic waste. Currently plastics are not collected separately and they are collected alongside paper, cardboard and glass items. There has been a year on year increase in the amount of recycling that is being collected. Figures for the amount of plastic collected show that in the first two quarters of 2018/19 the total amount collected was equal to the amount collected for the whole of the 2017/18 municipal year. However contamination of items is an issue and so does affect the total amount actually recycled. Another issue is the confusion that residents are experiencing in terms of what can and cannot be recycled and the facilities that the Council has access to to recycle.

The Council has a contract with Veolia so that when recycled waste is collected it is sent to Veolia's facility at Tyseley for further sorting. Veolia then take plastic waste that can be recycled and it is used in the formation of new plastic items.

WRAP are working with the Council on best practice and making improvements to Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) and are also lobbying the Government to ensure that there is a set recycling standard that can be used by all local authorities.

The Council does need to engage with residents and communicate better on what can and cannot be recycled. There is an issue with getting adequate sized facilities to deal with trade waste in the available space. There is also the issue of high levels of contamination in containers adjacent to high and low rise flats that are accessible from the public highway. The Council is working with housing tenant associations and BIDs who are promoting the issue of reducing plastic waste to help eliminate plastic related waste issues in those areas.

This year's Chelsea Flower Show display will be themed around plastic waste with graphics and videos displaying the journey of plastic waste to remind people to recycle more and reduce their plastic waste.

Haydn Brown, Procurement spoke to the Committee about what the Councils Procurement team are doing in respect of the social value policy implemented through the Birmingham Charter for Social Responsibility (BCSR).

He explained that the BCSR has been in place for 5 years and has been recently updated (December 2018) with changes coming into effect from April 2019. As part of this update the BCSR notes that 'contractors and their supply chains should support the banning of SUPS in their place of work and in the goods and services they provide'.

The BCSR promotes good practice however it cannot enforce what contractors do for instance in their workplaces. Contracts are enforceable and that is where stipulations can be made with regards to the procuring new goods and services in respect of SUPs.

EU legislation stipulates the need for reduce/eliminate 10 different SUPs as a high priority. The Councils Procurement team are looking to identify in current contracts and see what can be done differently to encourage supplier to eliminate and reduce plastic waste where practical, possible and appropriate. The intention is to speak to suppliers however the Council does need to consider that there may be additional costs that suppliers could be open to so therefore the conversation would be to reduce and use alternatives where possible. There is an opportunity for the Council (through the core scope of contract) with suppliers for example catering contracts to

put in a clause about the social value aspect (minimum of 10% weighting for those signed up to the BCSR) on contracts over £200k for services (higher on goods). In future this could form part of the requirements of a contract as the Council moves to a commissioning based model for outcomes (so will not be specifying a way of doing things). The Council's social value policy will be working with contractors to achieve based on better outcomes for citizens.

Officer guidance is being refreshed in terms of the updates to the BCSR to take effect from April. Mandatory training will be available for commissioners, contractors and contract managers and this will be based on the Council's policies that will be incorporated in the BCSR and from part of the social value weighting.

In terms of changing the weighting of social value within a contract this can be discussed by commissioners and procurers to determine the element of social value.

Chris Neville, Regulation & Enforcement clarified that there are different types of licenses that businesses can apply for but there is no one single or generic license that businesses need to allow them to start trading.

In respect to regulation and enforcement the Council can only regulate as it is set out in law. There is no scope to apply condition on recycling for example. Conditions of a license can be put in place based on 4 licensing objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder;
- Prevention of public nuisance;
- Prevention of children from harm; and
- Public safety

In respect of good example of sustainable shopping shared he added that the Council will be bidding for funding from the 'Future High Streets Fund' (a Government fund of £675m available for local authorities) to regenerate high streets and encourage footfall. The Council needs to identify one location that is currently a failing area and the opportunity to encourage sustainable types of businesses such as the clean kilo supermarket can be included as part of the bid.

Work is also happening with the Market Traders Committee in the Bull Ring market to encourage non-use of SUPs (in cafes and on stalls using disposable plastic bags).

The Council's Events section provides an events guide with a useful section on sustainability in events management. It is not a requirement for businesses to comply however examples are given to encourage uptake. Furthermore if events are held on Council land then the Council can make it mandatory on the use of SUPs and other environmentally friendly practices.

Neil Carney, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games confirmed that planning for the Games is in the very early stages. The last year has been mobilisation of staffing and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

There are 8 key themes and sustainability is one of the themes. A key outcome of the Games is to leave a positive legacy. The Organising Committee (OC) are leading on the

sustainability theme and are recruiting a post to lead on this agenda to ensure that it integrated throughout the planning and delivery of the Games.

A consultant has been enlisted to report on best practice from previous Games so that Birmingham can include this into the planning. Alongside this there have been workshops with partners and stakeholders to look at shaping the discussion on what the ambition and shaping discussion on what is achievable. This includes messages on sustainability and promoting prevention as well as reuse and recycling and ensuring that facilities are in place to meet demand. This includes promoting active travel and the possibility of a 'green map' as a legacy.

RESOLVED:-

The Chair, Cllr Clements thanked the attendees for their input and outlined the timetable for drafting of the report and it's presentation to all Councillors at a meeting of the full Council in June 2019.

6. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair outlined future meeting dates and agenda items and noted that the Clean Air Strategy was out for consultation and encouraged members to feedback any comments they may have.

7. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

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

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. 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.

The meeting ended at 12:12 hours.