

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 18th December 2019, Committee Room 2 – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

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

Also Present:

Councillor Julien Prichard

Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive

Ian MacLeod, Acting Director, Inclusive Growth

Jane Trethewey, Assistant Director, Housing Development

Sylvia Broadley, Specialist Energy Manager, Inclusive Growth

Simon Needle, Principal Arboriculturist/ Principal Ecologist, BCC

Joe Green, Travel Demand Manager, Inclusive Growth

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

Cllrs Choudhry and Jones.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meetings held on the 20th November were agreed. Cllr Huxtable requested that the Local Engineering re-design item deferred from that meeting is re-scheduled. The Chair agreed and undertook to discuss it under the work programme agenda item.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY

(See document No.1)

The Chair, Cllr Clements explained the purpose of the meeting and welcomed all attendees. It was explained that councillors involved in the cross-party motion on climate change were invited and Councillor Julien Pritchard was in attendance today. Apologies had been received from other councillors who were unable to attend.

Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive referred to the presentation circulated that covered the work that had been undertaken since the City Council had declared a climate emergency and highlighted that: -

- Since the City Council declared a climate change emergency on 11th June 2019 the work to help shape an action plan for how the city can achieve the 2030 ambition has been given to the cross-party and multi-agency Route to Zero (R20) Taskforce.
- The Taskforce is focused on two main areas of activity presently. Firstly, work to identify the technical baseline is being commissioned as currently this is not at the level wished for to get the investment required. This will help build an evidence base for and aid the case for investment. Secondly, the Taskforce is looking at how citizens voices and views can be channelled appropriately. Work is being undertaken with partners on this engagement agenda. Further details of the group and work of the Taskforce to date is included in the additional report circulated to Members.
- It was explained that national, local and regional alignment on this agenda is a critical issue for the immediate future and the next decade. To support this a significant amount of investment is needed and aligned across these tiers.
- Members were told that climate change action has been embedded in the Council Plan as an additional priority. This will allow for work in this area to flow into the work of each directorate through the planning and performance management framework.
- Finally, it was highlighted that an interim report would be presented to the City Council meeting in February 2020 with a final report now scheduled for the June 2020 City Council meeting (due to the Mayoral election and purdah period). The Committee's involvement will also be scheduled.

The following issues were raised by Members: -

- Concern on the differing timescales set to reach 'zero carbon' and alignment across local, regional and national government. The figures are 2030 (BCC),

2041 (West Midlands Combined Authority) and 2050 (Government) respectively.

- There are two assemblies (Birmingham and national) focussed on climate change both scheduled for March 2020 and concern was raised on how local, national and regional priorities and aims fit together.
- The Council needs to go with a list of asks to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and government to ensure that the city has adequate resources to deliver.
- Resident engagement is a key issue. How are residents being engaged with to explain the lifestyle changes needed for example on the retro-fitting of properties?
- The culture of the Council needs to change and react to the declaration of an 'emergency' rather than 'business as usual'. A key issue is the ability to 'pivot' mid-project so that changes and adaptations can be made in line with changing priorities and reacting to what is happening rather than just being tied into something because a report has been 'signed off'.
- It was felt that the climate change agenda should not be an additional point in the Council Plan but should be the 'main frame'.
- Much of the work being done is positive but what is the city doing differently and what has clearly changed? What is a 'just transition'?

In response to the points raised, Members were told: -

- A conversation is taking place with partners to compliment and support the work being done with local people and communities. This is a networked approach leading to a citizen's assembly. The Committee will be kept up to date on developments.
- There has been a culture change and the work being done on the climate change agenda is at the heart of what the Council is doing and a key priority. This is will be explained further in work that Council service areas are involved in and is set out in the presentation.
- The Council needs to be mindful of legal challenge with those schemes and projects that are funded for example from ring-fenced monies as the funding could be lost. Therefore 'pivoting' at any point during a project needs to done with care.
- It was explained that the term 'just transition' was used to understand the factors and impact on those who are most vulnerable to the changes proposed. It was important as part of this that people take the journey with the Council on this agenda. It was equally imperative that inequalities are not exacerbated and therefore an impact assessment and scenario modelling will be undertaken so that mitigations can be put in place. This will allow for an investment case to be made to government.

- It is recognised that significant investment is required on a national basis. The Council is taking note of what other councils are doing through the core cities group.

Ian MacLeod, Acting Director, Inclusive Growth and supporting officers then talked Members through the presentation that covered the Council's operational workstreams of Housing, Waste, Energy, Green and Blue Infrastructure, Developing the green economy and Transport.

The following key points were made: -

- The Council is the biggest house builder in the city and is challenged with retro-fitting of existing stock and seizing the opportunity with new builds particularly in leading the way in zero carbon houses and modular construction. This includes plans to pilot Passivhaus newbuilds and a special project team has been set up to take this forward.
- Retro-fitting is also being looked at and is a massive challenge with the Council's existing housing stock. The key issue is a significant amount of funding is needed from government. Officers are looking at opportunities to access funding and pilots.
- There are many areas of good practice in relation to retro-fitting however it is an area of constant change with technological advances being made. The Council wants to ensure that it takes this into account when investing to ensure effective and efficient use of funds. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the process is managed and delivered properly to residents, so they are supported to make the lifestyle changes needed to live in the houses of the future.
- The Draft Waste Strategy (2017) was not adopted however ambitious targets were set. The contract for disposal of waste is due to be re-procured and this is an opportunity to ensure that the strategy and the new contract (at renewal) are fully aligned with the climate change agenda.
- In terms of energy usage there is a focus on how the city meets its future energy supply and grasps the opportunities available in terms of the current and future plans to meet the target set of 60% CO2 reduction. The Council's gift is in how it can help decarbonise heat and use energy better to enable transport and infrastructure to work more efficiently (for example energy use in the home and powering electric vehicles). As per other work areas there is a role for how the Council supports this agenda through its influence and what energy is in scope as the city moves towards meeting new targets. The role of supporting citizens was also acknowledged and the need for support from government with investment and infrastructure in order for the Council to achieve its aims.
- The focus on Green and Blue Infrastructure and developing the green economy has been through the city's work on trees through the tree strategy, green infrastructure and the work at Tyseley energy park. Work has been undertaken with partners to protect, promote and enhance green infrastructure to deal

with issues such as mitigation measures for flooding and biodiversity enhancements.

- In the area of Transport, the focus has been on the efficient use of moving vehicles around the city, encouraging and promoting the use of sustainable vehicles and methods of travel and ensuring Council policies reflect this agenda.
- A number of projects to improve public transport in Birmingham and across the West Midlands are in progress however the effects will be felt in the mid to long-term. Quick wins can be gained in improving bus patronage through bus priority measures and improving the walking and cycling infrastructure on offer to encourage people to take these options where possible for their journeys. The benefits to this are in reducing congestion and air pollution and improving the well-being of commuters especially for travel into and around the city centre. Much of this is set out in the Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP) due to go to out to public consultation in the new year.

Members then made the following points: -

- Can we pressure/challenge developers to go over and above the standard planning requirements by setting higher targets?
- Can the Council challenge/find out the reasons why the planning inspectorate turn down requests made challenging the set requirements and is there learning that can be done so that in future stronger cases can be made?
- Recognition that the Council has a leading planning department, but staff shortages has proved a real challenge. There is a need to rebuild capacity and resources need to be sought from government to address this.
- It would be useful to understand how other Councils have set the bar higher in respect of planning requirements and ensuring developments are low carbon. It would be useful for Birmingham to learn from this when undertaking a review.
- How much have we influenced energy requirements through our internal planning conditions or on voluntary basis? Have we advised developers on low energy consumption?
- Better partnership working is needed for example in flood mitigation measures to get schemes working faster that could help alleviate further problems in areas where flooding is a key issue.
- Is monitoring undertaken on developments to ensure they are keeping to energy standards in particular industrial and commercial sites?
- How ambitious are the standards set as part of the heating systems in the Commonwealth Games Village?
- There has been a loss of skills over the last 30 years within the field of green and environment. This is a big issue for the region in the future and needs to be addressed as much of the future jobs in this area will provide people with sustainable careers.

- The future Waste Strategy needs to be looked at differently and more widely in light of the climate change emergency declared. There are some key issues that need tackling such as the use of the incinerator at Tyseley. The Council also needs to look at waste solutions across the West Midlands region and with other local authorities as the strategic responsibility does not rest with Birmingham.
- In terms of the Heat Decarbonisation Delivery Plan (HDDP) that is being negotiated with government is the process happening with other local authorities and what is the challenge and level of resource needed?

In response to the points raised, Members were told: -

- All the key issues raised have a need for further resource and investment. Alongside this it is imperative that citizen engagement is undertaken to ensure that the people of the city are on the journey and are equipped to live, travel and work in a more sustainable way.
- There are a range of policies within the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) and set targets. These policies don't go far enough in terms of the current climate emergency agenda and there is a challenge as to how the Council responds to that. However, there is a Development Planning Document (DPD) that provides more detailed guidance around a number of key areas such as air quality, landscaping and trees, parking and lowering car parking standards as part of the transport agenda. These policies can be looked at and reviewed much more easily than the BDP that would take in the region of 2-3 years to review. There is a discussion to be had with government on how we review standards for sustainable construction outside of the BDP more quickly and look at how we can get this review in place.
- Other local authorities have renewed their development plans more recently and have challenged the Planning Inspectorate more successfully in pushing the set standard resulting in quicker changes to planning regulations and getting those standards adopted.
- There are some examples of key developments that include good practice such as Peddimore (BREEAM standard).
- The Council must be careful in applying the planning process as it cannot refuse developments based on anything outside of the regulations. It can be costly to the city to challenge anything refused if it meets planning requirements.
- It was clarified that Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Strategy (2011) was based on the concept at the time of a generic policy that applied across the city rather than being specific to individual areas that have differing needs and requirements.
- There is a resource issue in relation to the amount of time to review planning applications and there is potential with new developments in relation to increasing tree canopy however developers do not finalise design plans until after the planning application is approved so this is a challenge.

- Speed of delivery on the Commonwealth Games and the amount of electricity being pushed with regards to the heating systems in the Games Village has meant getting in as many viable green rooves as possible within the limited time frame. This has been done in the context of complying with set national building regulations.
- In relation to the DHHP the government is working out how this can be achieved in the set timescale. 5 cities have been prioritised for further work on how decarbonisation looks like at a city level as it is different for each city dependant on its size and geography. Birmingham has been included in this.
- As part of the upcoming BTP, reallocation of transport space has been addressed with a commitment for every scheme coming forward to be checked alongside the set standards and to ensure that it is in-line with the climate change agenda. An example of this is a zero car-parking standard for commercial development and residential property in the city centre.

RESOLVED: -

1. Further updates to be provided to the Committee in March and May in line with the timescale for a full report to City Council in June 2020. Members will also be provided with an informal briefing prior to the interim report to City Council in February 2020.
2. A communication and engagement plan to be presented to the R20 Taskforce at their meeting today will also be circulated to the Committee.
3. Cllrs Pritchard and Clements requested further information on how the City Council can learn from how (and which) other Councils were able to set the planning requirements higher for developers (in terms of sustainable developments) as part of their respective Developments Plans or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
4. Further information on the Dudley Road scheme to be provided.

6. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No.2)

The Chair outlined the changes that needed to be made to the work programme due to a delay in decisions owing to purdah rules. Members then discussed the re-scheduling of items, and it was agreed that an amended work programme would be circulated to the Committee for comment. It was agreed that an additional meeting would be held in May to accommodate outstanding items on the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED: -

1. An amended work programme to be circulated to the Committee for comment.
2. Members agreed to hold an additional meeting on Wednesday 13th May at 10am. Further details of venue to be confirmed and circulated.

7. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

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

The Chair received a petition on behalf of Birmingham Friends of the Earth in relation to the Bus Priority scheme on Moseley Road and Alcester Road that has been open to consultation.

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 12:31 hours.