

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1400 hours on 17th February 2021, Online Meeting – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

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

Also Present:

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks

Hamira Sultan, Consultant in Public Health and Future Parks Accelerator Director

Nick Grayson, Green City Manager

John Myatt, Transport Planning & Investment Manager

Hannah Willetts, Head of Curzon and Enterprise Zone Development

Stephen Arnold, Head of Clean Air Zone (CAZ)

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager Environmental Protection

Ian MacLeod, Interim Director, Inclusive Growth

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

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

Councillor Olly Armstrong.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Standing declarations noted.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meetings held on the 20th and 29th January were agreed.

5. FUTURE PARKS ACCELERATOR PROJECT (FPA)

(See Item No.5)

The Chair welcomed Cllr John O'Shea, Hamira Sultan, Consultant in Public Health and Future Parks Accelerator Director and Nick Grayson, Green City Manager to the meeting.

The importance and many benefits of parks was highlighted by Cllr O'Shea in supporting health and wellbeing and wider benefits relating to employment and housing. Hamira Sultan then shared her presentation and made the following points: -

- Ensure that the FPA and green space is embedded in all elements of work that is done in the city and aligned with 4 key areas in the Council Plan on health & wellbeing, children, housing and jobs & skills. This includes a focus on how the FPA can support work on sustainability and climate change issues and is linked with the Commonwealth Games team on work in this area.
- The FPA can be utilised as an asset-based model for example supporting employment and skills opportunities through volunteering in council owned parks or green spaces and ensuring that green space is maximised in housing and developments.
- Tackling climate change is crucial and the focus has been on mitigation (tackling the causes) whereas adaptation (changing the way we live) is equally important and a key focus of the FPA. For example, encouraging people to make small changes in their everyday lives such as using public transport or walking for journeys. This has a longer-term effect not only on the environment but also helping people to connect to nature and green spaces and the added benefit that this brings to health and wellbeing.

In discussion with members the following points were made: -

- Creating more open green space is a challenge where new space does not exist, but it is important to look at the quality of the existing space and balance in terms of investment available as funding is a key issue. However, the FPA is being used to try and encourage the use of existing space and to use green space differently such as using grass verges for planting and the Highways section is being liaised with on this.
- There has been a massive surge in usage of parks due to the pandemic including an increase in waste produced and support is welcome to fund security and policing to deal with anti-social behaviour and inappropriate use.
- Section 106 monies and Community Infrastructure Levy funding (CIL) has been used as part of the agenda to improve public open space and used for appropriate projects as they come forward. Equally important is to ensure that money agreed for public open space from the developer is received. However

these opportunities are site specific and relate to development and do not reach the challenge that the city faces in terms of financing green space. Therefore, a longer-term view on priorities of the Council and how those are tackled differently is needed through collective governance rather than it being the responsibility of just one service area.

- The establishment of an independent Parks Forum would help with this idea as well as being able to supplement at a community level and sit outside of Council revenue funding.
- The city has previously applied for pocket park funding (and there are examples around Birmingham) however there has been concern at the time that this was capital funding for creating a space that there was no future revenue funding for.
- Birmingham is also part of an international group of cities called the 'Biophilic Cities' and there are cities in this group who have a greater number of pocket parks and are not government or federal funded schemes. Instead these parks are locally raised, supported or sponsored. This is an opportunity that Birmingham can look at.
- Work is taking place with Edinburgh on the 20-minute neighbourhood concept where they have taken a health focus. Work is taking place to see how this might operate in Birmingham and would require working at scale with partners. A model and assessment criteria would need to be developed and could be tested for example by having spatial pilots in East Birmingham over the course of 12 months to improve health outcomes. This would mean monitoring outcomes through cross co-ordination of services and analysing the cost/benefit of such an approach and being able to fund this through multiple funding solutions.
- Work is being led by Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene as part of a restructure of his service area in relation to 'green' jobs and careers to encourage more people into this area at the City Council through apprenticeship opportunities (currently 20 opportunities are planned). A framework is being developed with input from the Landscape Institute to ensure that support is available locally for trainees through local colleges and providers for those interested in accessing. There is however the issue of sustainability to continue this long-term year on year and the need for a job at the end of the apprenticeship and this is being looked at as part of the restructure.
- It was confirmed that the Council has a long-standing relationship with Pershore College in relation to horticultural students and the Council's Employment and Skills team is looking at what current colleges have on offer to support this agenda.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

6. UPDATE ON WASTE DISPOSAL PROCUREMENT

The Chair outlined the background to the update on the waste disposal procurement process and highlighted that the Committee have been tracking progress with Cllr O'Shea during the last year. It was added that Friends of the Earth (FoE) had produced a briefing that had been circulated to all members posing some challenges and highlighting concerns.

The Chair noted the live procurement process and the constraints on what can be shared in a public forum.

Cllr O'Shea reiterated the live procurement process and then made the following points: -

- Package 1 involves the current Tyseley Energy from Waste Plant and Phase 1 of the dialogue process has been completed known as the 'invitation to submit a detailed solution' stage.
- Phase 2 should be starting at the beginning of March and is due to complete in November. There will then be a process of tenders being compiled with final tender evaluation by November 2022 with finalisation by the end of 2022. A formal decision on the contractor will be made in January 2023.
- Package 4 is being looked at which is the processing of dry mix recyclates and a market engagement process is taking place. This is within schedule. Government policy changes are being anticipated and change is expected for example the introduction of a deposit return scheme. It is expected that there will be an effect on the city's recycling levels in light of this and assessments are being made on the impact.
- The current contract finishes in January 2024 with an alternative in place prior to this date. In anticipation of changes to come forward from government for example on food waste there needs to be adequate time and funding given so that adjustments to contracts can be made and put in place.
- The procurement process is built on the anticipated recycling and waste disposal changes. Included in this is climate change considerations in respect of achieving carbon reduction and ensuring that organisations coming forward as bidders are aware of the Council's targets and ambitions during negotiations.
- FoE will be provided with a response in relation to the matters raised in the briefing note shared with members.

RESOLVED: -

1. The verbal update was noted.

7. SMITHFIELD MASTERPLAN: SUSTAINABILITY, CARBON FOOTPRINT AND TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS

The Chair welcomed John Myatt, Transport Planning & Investment Manager and Hannah Willets who talked through the presentation circulated.

The Council's transport plans were outlined in reference to how these fitted in with the ambition to transform the city centre focussing on improving cycling and walking infrastructure, promoting and providing more sustainable methods of travel, more

public open spaces and improving air quality. This ambition is being realised through the additional Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan and response to Covid-19 (through government funding provided for active travel measures) and is something that will be further developed as part of the Draft Birmingham Transport Plan that was consulted on in 2020 and is due to be adopted in 2021.

The Council and its partners have worked with Lendlease as the appointed developer and a high-level review of the masterplan was undertaken last year. This considered the proposed infrastructure schemes and developments to produce a revised concept masterplan and the many changes that have taken place to the area since the masterplan was originally published in 2016 were noted.

During discussion with members the following points were made: -

There are several considerations to take on board before the exact metro route can be determined and a business case made. The Birmingham Transport Plan and metro delivery plan will be used to consider routes, areas to be served, climate change targets, objectives of the combined authority and growth across the region before anything further can be determined.

In terms of rail provision for the Smithfield area the masterplan covers the design rather than any transport assessments however these will come forward for the site from developers as part of the planning process. There is an expectation that provision to New St and Moor St stations as well as sustainable walking and cycling infrastructure and options will come forward. Improvements to Moor St station would be considered as part of this including those routes due to be enhanced and built by the time the development is built.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. A further update to be scheduled on the Smithfield development plans with Lendlease invited to discuss issues further in relation to public open space.

8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair re-ordered the agenda to bring forward the items to be discussed under 'Other Urgent Business' as outlined at the beginning of the meeting.

Clean Air Discussion

Cllr Clements explained that officers were in attendance in response to the issues raised at the last meeting in relation to the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) and city centre train stations. A letter had been written to Stephen Arnold, Head of CAZ on behalf of the Committee noting the concerns raised by members to measures taken to improve air quality in New St station in particular and the detrimental impact on the air quality outside of the station.

Stephen Arnold, Head of CAZ talked members through his presentation outlining the causes and types of air pollution, the legal framework that the local authorities must adhere to and the action being taken by the council and partners to tackle air pollution. It was also clarified that the rail industry has its own framework for

improving air quality that all train operators are involved in including improvements to stations and rolling stock.

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager Environmental Protection explained that air pollution sensors are not located close enough to stations to ascertain an accurate picture of where the pollution is from and that it could be the impact of other traffic in the area. Furthermore, air pollution levels from the stations is tracked to understand the trends and report on the annual average concentration as a legal obligation and this data is available on the Council's website.

It was added that following the discussion at the Committee's January meeting in relation to an increase in air pollution around city centre stations it is the intention to review the area around New St Station and monitor the actual concentrations more closely with equipment in place as part of the revised Air Quality Action Plan. This will help to assess where the pollution is originating from and whether there is any impact from local traffic causing pollution levels to rise.

The Chair thanked the attendees and noted that the Committee will keep track of the issues as part of the development of the Air Quality Action Plan and the Clean Air Strategy.

Tackling Climate Change issues within the Council's Budget Proposals

Ian MacLeod, Interim Director, Inclusive Growth joined the meeting to update members on the proposed funding within the Council's budget proposals to deal with measures identified in the climate emergency action plan. The budget is due to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 23rd February. It was stated that:

- A sum of £1.8m has been identified to set up a specific climate change and sustainability team. This was detailed in the Route to Zero (R20) work that recognised that a separate team to deal with issues relating to the climate emergency declared by Full Council in June 2019 was required.
- A strategic outline business case has been developed for the climate change and sustainability team. The business case details specifically the inclusion of an Assistant Director for Climate Change who will lead on the work and this is included in the budget proposal to be discussed at Full Council.
- A team will be recruited on the basis of a 2-year budget provision and in future will need to be self-funding.
- The two key sources of funding within the medium-term financial plan to support this agenda are £15m capital fund and £60m delivery fund. The latter will support building capacity and skills in the future across directorates.

The Chair thanked Ian MacLeod for the update on the funding and reassurance in respect of the important agenda that affects all parts of the Council.

RESOLVED: -

1. The presentation on 'Clean Air' was noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No. 8)

The Chair raised the opportunity to have a thorough discussion of the annual flood risk management action plan at the committee's next meeting.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

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

None.

11. 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 15:59 hours.