

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 November 2021 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Paul Maslin (Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, Tauseef Anwar, Mark Ingleby, Silvana Kelleher, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, John Muldoon, Stephen Penfold, James Royston, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski and James-J Walsh

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillors Octavia Holland (Vice-Chair), Peter Bernards, Bill Brown, Juliet Campbell, Suzannah Clarke, Liam Curran, Sophie Davis, Colin Elliott, Alan Hall, Carl Handley, Coral Howard, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Louise Krupski, Samantha Latouche, Jack Lavery, Rachel Onikosi, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Joani Reid, Sakina Sheikh and Alan Smith.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Aisling Gallagher, Jim Mallory, Pauline Morrison, James Rathbone and Susan Wise

ALSO PRESENT: Christopher Hammond (UK100), Councillor Patrick Codd (Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive), Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability), Charlotte Dale (Head of Overview and Scrutiny), Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm), Murray James (Director of IT and Digital Services), Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager) and Atika Mohammed (Head of Insight, Transformation & OD)

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken, or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 It was noted that Councillor Louise Krupski was a South East London Combined Heat & Power (SELCHP) Board Member.

3. Future Lewisham: A Greener Future / Update on Lewisham's Climate Emergency Action Plan

- 3.1 Cllr Penfold introduced the item and spoke of the importance of seeing all council business through the lens of climate change and of the efforts being made to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

3.2 Christopher Hammond from UK100 presented to the Committee and the following points were highlighted:

- UK100 brings together local authorities to share knowledge, collaborate, and petition the UK government on climate change using their collective power. Members pledge to play their part in the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change by accelerating local delivery of Net Zero emissions of greenhouse gases.
- Key issues discussed at COP26 included coal, cars, cash and trees and it was clear that a single co-ordinated global approach was required to reduce global warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade.
- Although the declarations on coal were not as strong as hoped, there had been a clear signal to the market that coal was on its way out and the UK had significantly reduced its reliance on coal in recent years.
- On cars it had been agreed that 100% zero emission vehicle sales would be achieved in the UK by 2035.
- Cash – it was critical to support the countries that would be affected most by climate change, noting that these were often developing countries. Unfortunately the investment needed had not reached pledged levels yet.
- On trees the news was more positive and Brazil in particular had pledged significant action against deforestation.
- The challenges for both local and national government included ensuring the public recognised the need for action; ensuring stakeholders had a stake and a say; reducing the ‘green premium’ as tech gets scaled up; and learning from mistakes.

3.3 In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- Whilst electric cars caused less pollution than petrol or diesel cars, they were not carbon neutral as the energy grid was not yet completely decarbonised meaning that electricity was still being generated, in part, via dirty sources. A key focus should be reducing as many unnecessary car journeys as possible, however they are made, and encouraging active travel (walking and cycling) and travel by public transport.
- Coal and burning wood remained a key energy source in many developing countries and the developed countries that had benefitted from this form of energy previously had a responsibility to help developing countries decarbonise.
- Local authorities had a unique leadership role and as well as taking action themselves should use their visible leadership to encourage their partners to take action too.
- Tackling climate change should not be seen as a fringe activity within a council but a strategic goal, with all services involved and with a strong lead from the executive management team and political leadership.
- Local authorities might wish to focus on the top three activities producing the most emissions and aim to reduce these significantly.
- Whilst progress was being made at a central government level it was not being made fast enough and was too centralised – the devolving of greater powers to local authorities would undoubtedly help speed up progress.
- UK100 was the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sustainable Finance, set up to help parliamentarians understand more about sustainable finance, so was in a good position to try to build political consensus for what is needed in the finance sector to reach Net Zero. It was clear that councils needed funding certainty, multi-year funding and funding rounds that were not overly competitive or complex.

- Decarbonising pension funds and other investments should be a key action for all local authorities and also something that individuals could do.
- Best or good practice was dependent on the sector. For example, Norway had recently decided to incentivise private landlords to retrofit their properties to make them more energy efficient by agreeing to pay 100% of the costs with an added 10% bonus which was an innovative, albeit controversial scheme.

3.4 Martin O'Brien introduced the officer report and highlighted the following:

- Lewisham's Climate Emergency Action Plan was published in March 2020, setting out plans to deliver on the ambition for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- There had been a 50% reduction in per capita emissions in the borough since 2005, but this had primarily been through decarbonisation of the electricity grid and the next phase of carbon reduction was significantly more challenging and personal, involving the heating of homes and travel.
- Whilst the scale of the climate crisis requires us to be ambitious and requires the council to demonstrate leadership through its own operations, the target cannot be delivered by the Council alone and it was imperative that local partners took action as well.
- The cost of delivering the ambition had been estimated as at least £1.6bn, yet the council had no new powers or substantial additional funding.
- Recent successes in relation to this agenda included (a) the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme project helping 7 corporate sites and 3 schools move towards being net zero ready; (b) the council's fuel poverty advice service supporting over 5,000 low income and vulnerable households; (c) Lewisham's Community Energy Fund supporting 11 local community projects, funding solar panels, lighting improvements and community engagement work; and (d) the securing of just over £5m of external funding for carbon reduction, fuel poverty and flooding projects.
- Priorities going forward included (a) retrofitting – both social and private housing; (b) ensuring the Catford Town Centre redevelopment was as sustainable as possible; (c) moving towards Net Zero Schools; and (d) communicating the climate emergency more widely through the Lewisham Climate Conversation; the Borough of Culture; and through lobbying and partnership work.

3.5 In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- The limitations of Ground Source Heat Pumps and concerns over their efficacy were well known and the procurement process was used to ensure that the performance of the technology would be of the standard expected. It was key to ensure that fuel demand was reduced by making the building as energy efficient as possible (e.g. through insulation) prior to installation to reduce the cost of energy bills.
- Although active travel and public transport were always preferable to car use, car journeys could not be eliminated and therefore electric vehicles had a part to play. Improving the infrastructure available in London for electric vehicles would be important.
- The move from gas to electricity in social housing might see bills go up for struggling families and similarly the social housing stock in Lewisham was such that cavity wall insulation was generally not possible. The costs of 'going green' needed to be carefully considered and minimised wherever possible.

- There was funding for low income families in properties with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F or G to support retrofitting. This was available via the Fuel Poverty Advice Service.
- Unfortunately the Government voucher scheme for retrofitting had been withdrawn.
- There was sometimes a conflict between planning policy and green measures as houses in conservation areas were often prohibited from installing double or triple glazing or solar panels that were visible from the street.
- Staff Resource to pursue this agenda was an issue given the financial context, which was why ensuring officers in all services took account of the climate emergency was so important.
- Communication with residents was important and, at the request of the Sustainable Development Select Committee, advice on straightforward actions people could take had been published. The Lewisham Climate conversation built on that and the forthcoming Borough of Culture Programme was also an opportunity to further this agenda.
- The Council and Lewisham Homes had applied for £1m from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to extend existing planned work of £3m in blocks in the north of the borough.

3.6 Owing to time pressures, the discussion on this item was limited to questions to officers and the invited speaker and their responses. Therefore, rather than reading out her prepared speech, Councillor Kelleher was advised to circulate it to Members of the Committee following the meeting. Councillor Ingleby also reported that he would be circulating some relevant research and articles to committee members following the meeting.

3.7 The Chair was not minded to have this topic on the agenda for every Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. He felt strongly that this was not a matter for one committee only and wherever possible, as Councillor Krupski had previously suggested, the climate emergency should be an integral part of all scrutiny items rather than being a stand-alone item. He suggested that tackling climate change was a matter for the whole council, with a role for every service, and that this was why Councillor Penfold would be recommending that all select committees should consider how the agenda relates to the services and policies they scrutinise and appoint a climate change champion to ensure this.

3.7 Councillor Penfold summed up discussions and suggested three recommendations which were agreed by the Committee.

3.8 **RESOLVED:** That

1. Each select committee should appoint a climate change champion to ensure that (a) the annual work programme takes climate change matters into account; and (b) officers are given appropriate steers in relation to the reports for specific items, to ensure they include relevant climate change considerations.
2. Planning Members receive training on the interaction between the climate emergency and the planning process.
3. There is an annual all-member briefing on the climate emergency covering the action taken and action planned by

the council and partners - and information on any constraints and challenges.

4. Update on Improving the Resident Experience

- 4.1 Councillor Walsh introduced the item, followed by Atika Mohammed. It was noted that the ideas generated via the session for Members with Lou Downe, a service design expert, and the four member workshops, would be taken forward as part of the resident experience programme. Members were thanked for the time and effort that they had put into working on this following the last committee meeting. Councillor Kevin Bonavia, as the relevant Cabinet Member, echoed this thanks and reiterated that a fit for purpose casework system would be developed as part of the programme. Murray James reported that there was no technical impediment to staff not being able to clear their voicemail inboxes and that instructions on how to do this would be re-circulated to all staff.
- 4.2 **RESOLVED:** That (a) the update be noted; (b) officers working on the Resident Experience Programme keep the councillors that have led on this work up to date on progress; and (c) a further update on the programme is received at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chair:

Date:
