

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 24 January 2022

NOTE: This meeting was held remotely. A recording of the meeting can be found at: <https://youtu.be/zCgTcM8Wstk>

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Frances Umeh (Chair), Iain Cassidy, Ann Rosenberg, Fiona Smith, and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler

Other Councillors: Councillors Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) and Sue Fennimore (Deputy Leader)

Officers: Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Environment), Jim Cunningham (Climate Policy and Strategy Lead), Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm), Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency), Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations), Emily Hill (Director of Finance), Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance -Environment), Gary Hannaway (Head of Finance – Parking) and Annie Baker (Assistant Director – Street Environment Services)

Two residents also attended to ask public questions on Items 5 and 6.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8 November 2021 were noted. As this was an informal meeting, minutes will be formally agreed at the next meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair noted that the Committee had received public questions on two of the items on the agenda. The questions and answers can be found under Item 5 (Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme Update) and Item 6 (Prototype Containerisation and Food Waste Collection Service).

5. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency), gave a presentation on the climate programme currently being delivered in the Council and provided a summary of the following key points:

- Work by the resident-led Climate and Ecological Emergency Commission (CEEC) was key in developing the Council's climate and ecology strategy.
- Their report recommended that the Council build knowledge around eight key themes, which had been reflected in the Council's strategy.
- A climate strategy implementation group was in place, to review plans and progress, for each of the eight themes.
- The Council was developing five climate action groups to help deliver the strategy and ensure that the Council was 'doing things with residents, not to them'.
- Local emissions had fallen and were down 41% since 2005. Majority of the reduction was from the electricity grid.
- The Council's climate and ecology strategy was approved by Cabinet in September 2021 and was built on an independent audit of local carbon emissions as well as the recommendations from the CEEC and a public consultation.
- An overview was provided on the initiatives underway in each of the eight workstreams of the climate and ecology strategy.

The Chair explained that the Committee had received some written questions from members of the public in advance of the meeting and speakers would also be invited to ask a question or make a comment to address the main areas of concerns as follows:

Q1. A resident asked if feedback could be provided on why the Council performed so poorly on the Healthy Streets initiative compared to similar inner London boroughs. What is the Council's plans to improve this?

In response Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency), explained that the Council had an ambition to enable more active travel journeys in the borough. Recent progress included construction of the King Street safer cycle pathway and design progress on the Wood Lane cycleway project.

The Council had also expanded and made permanent the first traffic, congestion, and pollution reduction scheme in South Fulham. This scheme

had reduced rat running traffic significantly and the neighbourhood was now much more pleasant for walking and cycling. The Council would be engaging with the residents to extend the scheme to the west side of Wandsworth Bridge Road and introduce a 20-mph speed limit on Wandsworth Bridge Road along with other improvement measures. The borough had also introduced a 20-mph speed limit in areas that had received general support.

Better Brackenbury was another example where the Council was coproducing public realm improvements to make the area healthier for all. The Council would continue enhancing the public realm and reducing the negative impacts of traffic for its residents, and this work would further improve the Healthy Streets scores.

Q2: I welcome the update on how the Council is responding to the climate and ecological emergency and I am pleased that you continue to make reference to the CEEC's report that was prepared by a group of residents in 2020. The report highlighted the scale of the emergency we now face and the impact this will have on the lives of people living and working in the borough.

What are the Council's plans for the climate and ecological emergency communications strategy and why is the communication strategy not being prioritised in line with the Commission's report that placed communication and engagement as a core requirement to enabling an effective response to the emergency?

Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency), noted that the Council's climate and ecology strategy had communication of its vision, challenges, and opportunities at its heart. A dedicated 'engagement and influence plan' outlined how the Council would deliver its vision for climate engagement and influence: *'Residents in the borough were engaged with the climate agenda, empowered to grow their own ideas and to actively participate in local action. The Council supported a resident-led response to the climate and ecological crisis, maintaining an ongoing, open, and honest conversation, ensuring that all voices of the borough were heard and included. Our residents, communities, and organisations were engaged, educated and empowered to live net-zero carbon lifestyles in an ecologically rich borough'*.

In the past year, the Council had developed partnerships, communicated with residents, and engaged community groups, businesses, and organisations. Officers in the climate unit and other relevant services regularly present and held workshops, to discuss local climate action with community groups, in public spaces and at dedicated events. The team had undertaken over dozens of engagements in the past year and were available to any member of the community.

The Council launched a monthly climate connects newsletter to share information, news and resources. The Leader's weekly e-news message to residents had featured opinions on the climate and ecological emergency many times. Climate action was the subject of a double-page spread in the Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F) winter booklet that went to all households in December. Each week the Council promoted climate activity on its social

media, recent examples had featured the King Street cycle lane, EV charging points, and tree planting in Margravine Cemetery.

The Council ran a series of webinars for residents and businesses during London climate action week. In the run-up to COP26 in October, the Council launched its first H&F climate carnival and hosted 65 virtual and physical events with dozens of partners for residents, businesses and staff to get involved, get informed, and be inspired. This was the biggest programme of local events anywhere in the UK for COP26.

The Council also had a well-developed climate education approach with children and young people. Twenty-nine schools were involved in H&F's award-winning climate education programme, with 30 teachers trained on a UN-accredited course. Hundreds of children, young people and families engaged with climate and ecology during H&F's 'Summer in the City' festival. In partnership with the youth council, the Council had set up a weekly meeting of youth climate ambassadors to support youth-led climate action.

Doing things with residents was one of the Council's six core values. The strategy had been guided by the resident led CEEC. The Council was developing plans for new resident climate action groups to coproduce the ongoing development and delivery of its action plan. Recently, it launched the H&F climate alliance, a platform to engage with businesses and organisations with access to a carbon tracking app, training and incentives.

Progress was also being made in other areas the Commission asked the Council to prioritise. The Council's website had been updated and now hosted climate information hub, education and resources to help enable climate action. There were plans to launch a new 'Library of Things' in Hammersmith to help residents borrow more and buy less. A forthcoming campaign would highlight the largest electric vehicle charging point network and encourage those who could and needed to drive, to switch to an electric vehicle. A local community climate fund would launch shortly to help support and grow grassroots action. The Council would continue to amplify community action. The video of local climate leaders demonstrated how taking climate action together and bringing residents and businesses with us on the journey to net-zero was crucial.

Q3. A resident asked when will the Council address the concerns of car dominance - with all its impacts on climate change, air pollution and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in the borough?

For example: What are the plans for subsidies for car sharing and cargo bikes? Why have there been delays after it declared a climate emergency for the Council to implement the 'tough' and transformative policies needed?

Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency), noted that the Council was working on reducing traffic and investing in cycling infrastructure, such as strategic cycle routes through Hammersmith, and the recently announced Wood Lane and Shepherds Bush Green cycle scheme. Some progress had been impacted due to the pandemic including uncertainty around Transport for London funding for major schemes. However, an interim scheme was implemented, and work was taking place on

permanent schemes for the borough. The Council also introduced a traffic, congestion, and pollution reduction scheme in South Fulham. The results had been significantly less traffic in the area and better air quality. The Council worked with the community to expand the scheme and introduce further traffic mitigation measures on Wandsworth Bridge Road.

The Council had also introduced emissions-based parking charges and would be exploring further policies that reduced and changed the profile of vehicles on the roads. This included introducing more travel choices such as the e-scooters, available through a hire scheme. The Council was expanding measures such as cycle training, a try-before-you-buy bicycle scheme, cargo bikes for hire, and our zero-emission e-cargo bike delivery service.

The Council needed to balance the requirements of all residents, whilst considering measures to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. For cycle hangars there were operational and maintenance costs plus high demand for spaces. The Council would be increasing the number as soon as funding became available, and costs to residents would be reviewed.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler thanked Paul Beaty-Pownall for the Commission's report and his question relating to the climate communications strategy. She requested that a copy of the engagements and influence plan be circulated to Committee members for review.

Action: Hinesh Mehta.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler commented that she was in favour of more lamp based electric vehicle charging points across the borough, as opposed to those installed as stand-alone units on streets, which she said added to street clutter. Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency) confirmed that the new charging points would be part of the lamp columns. He explained that the dedicated street charging points provided a faster charge compared to those installed in lamp columns. Both approaches had their merits, and it was important for the Council to offer a range across the borough. Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler enquired why faster charges could not be installed within the lamp columns to address resident demand. In response, Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Highways, Parks and Waste) provided details of the electrical requirements and confirmed that the faster charging points required more space.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler, referring to the 'No Mow May' campaign, reported that she had received complaints from residents concerning an increase in litter levels due to the length of the grass within the parks across the borough. In response Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency) noted that the Council had generally received positive feedback as a result of this campaign as well as the comments brought to the Committee's attention around litter concerns. Officers were working with colleagues across the Council to improve the appearance of the long grass. However, this would need to be balanced to allow biodiversity-friendly plants and wildlife to establish.

Councillor Iain Cassidy shared his concerns around the need for reducing motor vehicle usage in the borough. He commented that the data reported by the Department of Transport suggested that one of the largest increases in motor vehicle usage in London was smaller vans/ trucks and the main driver for this was online deliveries. He enquired if there were any schemes that could be implemented by the Council to work in collaboration with delivery companies and encourage them to consolidate their deliveries. In addition, he asked what powers the Council had to implement this and whether this required national legislation to be approved.

Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency) explained that this was a challenging sector to manage across London. However, schemes to tackle this area had been launched in past and most delivery companies reported that they had consolidated their deliveries before entering urbanised areas such as Hammersmith and Fulham. Local Authorities had the power to encourage and enable fleet operators to use electric vehicles and cargo bikes. National legislation would be required to reduce the number of deliveries and support more consolidation in hubs around London. The Council had made it a priority to explore a local freight strategy which would provide a way forward on this.

The Chair asked for further clarification to be provided on the feedback received from residents in relation to the 'No Mow May' campaign. In response Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency) noted that positive feedback was received from many residents as a result of this campaign. People were very interested in encouraging biodiversity, particularly within an urban environment such as Hammersmith and Fulham. In addition, residents also carried out similar initiatives in their private gardens to support nature and biodiversity.

The Chair enquired if any lessons had been learned that could shape the Council's approach to the Climate and Ecological Emergency programme. Hinesh Mehta (Strategic Lead - Climate and Ecological Emergency) highlighted some of the challenges to delivery that remained significant. It was noted that the climate and ecology strategy outlined the Council's objectives and actions at a high level. Detailed delivery strategies were currently being developed for some of the most critical and challenging aspects, such as retrofitting of Council housing and the corporate estate.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) outlined the importance of all the positive work that had been carried out by the Council as part of the climate and ecological emergency programme. It was noted that a climate strategy implementation group was in place, which consisted of the Leader, relevant Cabinet Members, Officers, and chaired by a member of the Commission. This group met monthly, reviewing plans and progress for each of the strategy's themes, with revolving attendance based on the subject area. It was noted that the electric vehicle charging point network had continued to expand across the borough. There were a broad range of charging stations available across the borough, to balance the needs of the community. The Council also formed its first 'tiny forest', a densely planted area of 600 trees, in Hammersmith Park in March 2021. Plans for further tiny forests were underway and expected to be planted in 2022, on Eel Brook Common and in Normand Park.

He acknowledged that developing a culture of carbon literacy within the borough was a priority for the Council. Consideration of climate and ecology in all activity was key to the success of the climate strategy.

The Chair welcomed the positive progress that had been made. She was pleased to see the community engagement and drive to involve more people in taking local climate action. She thanked residents for their questions and contributions and Officers for providing a comprehensive update on this item.

Members noted the report.

6. PROTOTYPE CONTAINERISATION AND FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) gave a brief presentation on the waste and recycling container project and provided a summary of the following key points:

- The current boroughwide service was sack based for refuse and recycling with no separate food waste collection.
- The prototype collection service for food waste and wheeled bin household waste and recycling began on 9 November 2020.
- 4,600 properties across six wards were currently operating the pilot.
- This provided an improved service for residents by tackling limited refuse capacity and increasing recycling rates.
- A summary was provided on the resident communication plan, including a performance update in the prototype area.

The Chair explained that the Committee had received some written questions from members of the public on the progress of the food waste collection pilot in advance of the meeting. Speakers would also be invited to ask a question or make a comment to address the main areas of concerns as follows:

Q1: Residents asked if there was a Council plan to extend the food waste collection (beyond the 6000 households) pilot scheme across the borough? The majority of residents within the borough live in flats, estates, and multi-occupation premises. What steps are being taken to explore schemes that can extend food waste collection for these residents?

Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) confirmed that the Council continued to monitor the impact of the prototype scheme. Given the seasonality of waste, officers needed to ensure they had over a years' worth of learning from the prototype scheme including feedback from flats and estates across the borough.

The Council's vision of getting the views of residents and elected members was important to the pilot. Co-production with residents would form part of any recommendations put forward for any future extension of the scheme, as well as considerations relating to the specification for the new waste management contract from 2023 onwards. Officers would seek residents' views of the prototype service through survey work in June and July 2022.

The Council was also working to introduce food waste recycling in education establishments within the prototype area.

Officers were following the Mayor of London Environment strategy which aimed by 2026 for no biodegradable waste to be sent to landfill. This was being achieved by the Council, and by 2030, the target of 65% of London's municipal waste would be recycled. There were powers in the new Environment Bill 2021 to ensure all Councils operated weekly separate food waste collections, preventing food waste from going to landfill or being incinerated. Officers were awaiting guidance on the Environment Bill implementation.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler explained that she had received some concerns raised by residents in relation to the containers not being returned to the relevant properties. She enquired how this would be resolved with the operatives. In response Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) noted that this was due to lack of supervision and training provided to agency staff. Officers were working with Serco's management team to ensure that the standard of the service provided by the operatives would be improved going forward.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for further clarification to be provided on when a full consultation for the food waste collection pilot would be carried out. In response Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) explained that the need to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to keep residents and colleagues safe had restricted the project to written or telephone communication beyond July 2021. The next steps to measure resident views on the service would be to carry out survey work in the prototype service areas in June and July 2022. This would be achieved through door-to-door engagement to ensure that the Council captured as accurate a picture of resident views as was possible.

Councillor Iain Cassidy commented that increased recycling rates in the borough were welcome and enquired what could be done to improve this further. Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) explained that providing the containerisation and food waste collection service to residents was one of the most effective ways to increase recycling rates. In addition, it would be beneficial to broaden the scheme and provide additional recycling provision to further separate household waste items, however this would be more challenging to manage in an urban environment.

Councillor Iain Cassidy enquired what the cost difference was between managing a bag of non-recyclable general waste compared to a container of recycling. Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) noted that the exact figures would be circulated to the Committee for review.

Action: Richard Shwe

Councillor Ann Rosenberg raised some concerns around the shortage of deliveries of the clear recycling bags provided to recycle in the regions where the food waste collection pilot had not yet been implemented. Richard Shwe

(Assistant Director of Environment Operations) explained that the timeframe for these deliveries had recently been amended, however he requested that further details of where these were not being received be sent to Officers so this could be resolved.

Action: Richard Shwe

The Chair asked for further clarification to be provided on the total number of complaints submitted to the Council as a result of the pilot and the nature of the feedback received by residents. Richard Shwe (Assistant Director of Environment Operations) confirmed that the service had performed well with less than 48 complaints over the past 12 months, across the 4600 properties where the pilot had been delivered. These were mostly regarding container returns to properties. Positive feedback was received with an increased interest from residents to enhance the scheme in other areas across the borough.

The Chair welcomed the comprehensive updates and acknowledged that a significant amount had been achieved to increase the recycling rates within the borough.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) thanked Richard Shwe and David Goodship (Waste and Recycling Manager) for all the positive work that had already been implemented for this pilot.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that a meeting be arranged with a group of residents who were keen to meet with Officers to discuss matters concerning the pilot scheme. Richard Shwe (Cabinet Member for the Environment) asked for their details to be forwarded to Officers so that this could be actioned.

Action: Richard Shwe

Members noted the report.

7. 2022 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Environment) and Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance - Environment) gave a presentation on the Environment revenue budget 2022/23, highlighting the following key points:

- The department managed an extensive range of front-line services for residents and businesses supporting Council values and priorities.
- An overview was provided on the major challenges faced by the department this year.
- These included maintaining day to day operations whilst managing Covid-19 impacts on service, continuing to improve and reduce the cost of existing and new contracts, such as waste and grounds maintenance.
- In addition to this the department also made improvements to various services.
- The department had a strong financial performance and delivered an underspend in 2020/21.

- For 2021/22 the department was working hard to balance the year-end outturn in line with budget. However, Covid-19 impacts may affect this.
- The budget for 2022/23 was summarised at directorate level.
- The key budget investments and future strategic issues were outlined in detail.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that a breakdown of the full parking budget and surplus be provided to the Committee.

Action: Gary Hannaway - Head of Finance (Parking)

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for further clarification to be provided on the outturn for 2020/21 which included a £1.3m underspend compared to the budget (excluding Parking Services). In response Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance - Environment) explained that this was in part due to savings that had been secured as part of the waste contract extension with Serco, which were contributed towards reserves for climate change. Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Environment) also provided an overview of the challenges faced within waste collection services as a result of Covid-19 impacting on the contractor's performance, with shortage of drivers and operatives, including the Council's approach on resolving these concerns.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that full details of the £1.3m underspend be circulated to the Committee.

Action: Kellie Gooch

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked for further clarification to be provided on the Council's long-term approach to parking charges as people had begun to shift in significant numbers to electric vehicles. He also enquired if Local Authorities had any powers to alter their parking charges based on the size of the vehicle. In response, Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Environment) noted that the Council's parking charges were based around its traffic management policies. Resident and visitor parking permits were also available to park in the borough. Currently, the Council's main priority was to focus on changing behaviour towards parking and encourage less car use in the borough. Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm) explained that most Local Authorities would focus on managing their parking spaces based on the type of vehicle in terms of emissions rather than the size. He was not currently aware of any Local Authorities charging for parking based on their size.

Councillor Ann Rosenberg commented that for certain people travelling by public transport was not an option. She asked if it was possible to consider a proposal whereby a parking permit enabled you to park for free between certain hours of the day anywhere within the borough. Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Environment) noted that this had been explored, and the Council would continue to review this option to ascertain if it was feasible. However, one of the key issues associated with this proposal, related to the amount of pressure residents already faced around locating parking near their homes.

The Chair commended the work of the Officers, the wider team and senior leadership for delivering a balanced budget, whilst managing the pressures associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members noted the report.

Meeting started: 18:45pm

Meeting ended: 21:00pm

Chair

Contact officer: Amrita White
Committee Co-ordinator
Governance and Scrutiny
☎: 07776672845
E-mail: amrita.white@lbhf.gov.uk