

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee

Minutes



Tuesday 31 January 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Nicole Trehy (Chair, attended remotely), Ross Melton (Chair of the meeting), Laura Janes, Stala Antoniadis and Jose Afonso

Other Councillors: Councillors Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) and Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform)

Officers:

Andre Mark (Head of Finance - Strategic Planning and Investment)

Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment)

Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance – Environment)

Hinesh Mehta (Head of Climate Change)

Peter Haylock (Operational Director of Education and SEND)

Georgina Herry (Lead Adviser for School Improvement, Children's services)

Jan Parnell (School Improvement Consultant)

Clerk: Debbie Yau

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE MEETING

As the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Nicole Trehy, was not feeling well and attending remotely, the Committee elected Councillor Ross Melton as the Chair of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. 2023 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) expressed his appreciation for staff in the Finance team who had worked out the current Budget under the difficult circumstances of rising rates of inflation and bank interests and a tight timeframe. He also highlighted the contributions of Cabinet Members in the tough process. The Budget had based on realistic assumptions to achieve savings and efficiency. Councillor Ree said he was proud that despite a 56% cut in general government grant funding as compared to 2010/11, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) was able to offer unique services such as providing free breakfasts to school children, abolishing home care charges, establishing a local Law Enforcement Team to keep the streets safe and clean and stopping the use of bailiffs to collect Council Tax debt. In view of the cost-of-living crisis which was affecting residents across the borough, the Council had included in the Budget new provisions of nearly £1 million (m) to help tackle the rising cost of living.

Corporate Budget

Andre Mark (Head of Finance - Strategic Planning and Investment) presented the item which covered the Budget 2023/24 and Mid Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25+. He outlined the national and local strategic operating environment, proposed revenue budget strategy 2023/24 and the key principles, Council Tax considerations, major savings proposals and growth allocations, and a Reserve summary. Members noted the dates for the proposals to be presented to the relevant committees, the Cabinet and Full Council.

Councillors Laura Janes and Nicole Trehy expressed thanks for the hard jobs of drawing up the Budget at a tough time and appreciated the excellent presentation.

Questions from the floor:

Caroline Kelly remarked that as the military had confirmed they shall take control of the weather in 2025, she questioned the establishment of this Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC). Councillor Rowan Ree referred to the creation and monitoring of new policy development via the PACs, the Climate Change and Ecology PAC was established at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2022 to cover key areas of concern in addition to "Children and Education", "Health and Adult Social Care" and "Housing and Homelessness" etc. He added that the current meeting was looking at the departmental revenue budget related to the Environment. Members welcomed residents' submission of relevant information for their consideration.

Helen Dell (Climate Change Commissioner) asked about the increase in the net cost of borrowing. Andre Mark said that it referred to the cost of borrowing rather than the borrowing *per se*.

Departmental Budget

Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment) presented the Revenue Budget 2023/24 of the Environment Services and outlined a wide range of universal services delivered to residents, the Environment recent achievements, the key budget changes relevant to this PAC.

In reply to Councillor Janes' questions, Bram Kainth clarified that the 301,000 books were issued for the library services. Regarding the roll-out of food waste collections, Bram noted that the new services of food waste collections formed part of the new waste collection and street cleansing contract, and discussions were ongoing with the new contractor as to when and how exactly this would be rolled out. He undertook to inform members about the implementation timetable once it was known.

ACTION: Bram Kainth

Councillor Jose Afonso noted that the total net budget for controlled parking account for 2023/24 was a projected surplus of £31,600 and asked how much of this is related to traffic fines. Bram Kainth agreed to provide this information.

ACTION: Bram Kainth

In response to Councillor Afonso's question, Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance – Environment) advised that under the portfolio of Leisure, Sport and Culture, the budget included all expenditure, including overheads and staffing, and confirmed that the contract for provision of the Council's leisure centres was a net-income generating contract, therefore provided at no cost to the Council, and it generated a return.

Councillor Afonso was concerned about the risk associated with the works on the Hammersmith Bridge. Bram Kainth explained that to ensure the bridge could be reopened to traffic at the earliest opportunity without any delay, the Council was progressing the works and incurring substantial expenditure at risk, until government funding was confirmed.

Councillor Ross Melton asked about the anticipated reduction in waste tonnages. Bram Kainth advised that the borough generally had low residual waste figures, with some changes during the pandemic, but the general projected trend over a longer period of time was for waste tonnages to improve. Waste disposal costs reduced by disposing of less overall and by moving residual waste to recycling.

Questions from the floor:

Responding to Wilf Macdonald Brown's questions, Bram Kainth pointed out that the breakdown of the parking account was published on the Council's website on an

annual basis. As regards bicycle hangers and cycle parking arrangements, they were funded through the capital budget, and investment on them would be made once resources were available. At Wilf's request, Bram agreed to send him the details of revenue raised by these facilities.

ACTION: Bram Kainth

Pat Tookey (Climate Change Commissioner) was concerned about the Council's measures put in place to decarbonize the borough and meet the target of net zero emission by 2030. She said that in addition to schemes such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, residents were keen to know the progress of other projects. For example, the roll-out of food waste collection services to the uncovered areas in the borough further to the pilot ran since 2020. Moreover, apart from retrofitting the public housing, the measures, if any, devised to support private homeowners to retrofit their properties. Pat expected to see the commitment of this Committee in informing residents regularly the borough's positions in the pathway to meet the 2030 target and the timeframe of the steps to be taken.

Councillor Ree explained that the current Committee meeting was examining the revenue budget for the day-to-day activities. The projects mentioned were related more to capital investment which was considered as part of a separate process, and a Climate Financial Strategy was being developed. He reckoned that 75% of the emissions originated from the housing stock and retrofitting the properties to become more energy efficient were taken care of under the Housing Revenue Account. Councillor Ree said that the Council was committed to hitting the 2030 target and highlighted the borough's green credentials including being accredited by an independent body for having the best climate emergency plan in London. The Council also had the highest concentrations of electric vehicle charging points in the country and air quality monitors. The Council was determined to make a difference to meet the expectations of the residents.

Pat Tookey appreciated the plans however she was concerned about their delivery, including the timeline and the estimated impact/extent of decarbonisation. Taking note of her concerns, Councillor Melton thanked the contributions of Pat as well as other residents for holding Committee members to account.

Caroline Kelly questioned investment on waste management as the contractors had made huge profits from the energy generated from waste. In response, Bram Kainth said that the LHBF had engaged contractors through tendering to collect waste from residents' doorsteps to waste depots. The LHBF was one of the four boroughs under the West Riverside Waste Authority (WRWA) which was responsible for waste disposals including managing the contractors. He noted that there were different ways of disposing wastes from depositing at landfills to burning them for energy.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) referred to the processes of waste disposal in which recyclable items, such as metals, plastics and paper, were separated from the general waste before disposal. The value of the recyclable items depended on the market conditions. On electricity from waste, Councillor Harcourt said the profit, if any, was subject to contract terms and market conditions, as well as the government's introduction of electricity

generating levers. He added that WRWA was a statutory, non-profit making body established under the Parliament.

Anna Maynard noted that schools could save about 6% from their food budget by going vegan. Bram Kainth remarked that the LBHF was always looking at every opportunity to decarbonise the footprint, and plant-based diet was one of them.

RESOLVED

That the Committee considered the budget proposals and made recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

6. CLIMATE EDUCATION IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM 2023

Georgina Herry (Lead Adviser for School Improvement, Children's services) presented Climate Education in H&F 2023 which included:

- Climate Education – Primary
- Summer in the City 2021/22 – Climate and Ecology Workshops
- The Thames Music Makers
- Climate Education – Secondary
- Climate Education Guide launching Summer 2023 – online resources
- The Pier – Climate Education and Wellbeing Centre – launching Autumn 2023 and project timeline

Councillor Jose Afonso expressed support to the Climate Education in H&F and looked forward to seeing more activities.

Councillor Ross Melton noticed that 32 and 7 primary and secondary schools respectively had been engaged under the H&F Climate Education and sought the percentages they represented. Georgina Herry advised that it was more than 50% for secondary schools. While some 19% of primary schools had been involved, the figure might change after the uncovered primary schools gained a better understanding through the Guide of the activities that could be done under Climate Education. Peter Haylock (Operational Director of Education and SEND) added that additional resources had been earmarked under the MTFs on promoting the Council's manifesto and strategies linking to industries with a view to attracting more secondary schools. He noted that the secondary schools engaged, except one, were all academy which could have their own programmes running separately. In response to the concern of Councillor Stala Antonaides, Georgina said the H&F borough aimed at consolidating work with the state primary schools before extending to the wider sector of the non-state schools.

On barriers preventing more school engagement as raised by Councillor Melton, Georgina Herry said that the community was still recovering from the pandemic with supporting pupils returning to schools, which might have taken time away from the schools' leaders. The audit conducted among schools could give a better understanding what should be done next, like promoting championship was a good way to ensuring start and seeing the benefits. To facilitate more engagements, activities could be held through the Climate Education network and case studies

highlighting inspiring work that had been done. Peter Haylock added that climate education remained strong in the science curriculum. However, as there was a significant reduction in the provision for teaching assistants, this would reduce the chance of the children to get out of the schools to join the additional activities relevant to climate education.

As regards Councillor Laura Janes' concern about evaluating the impacts of the programmes, Georgina Herry noted the need to demonstrate measurable outcomes within the governance process. She assured members that they were gathering participants' feedback and evaluating impacts from schools' case studies and would report back to this Committee in due course.

ACTION: Georgina Herry

Councillor Melton asked for the details about the Pier. Jan Parnell (School Improvement Consultant) noted that the premises of the Climate Education and Wellbeing Centre at the Pier was owned by Riverstone Living which had sublet it to the Learning Partnership of the Council for 6 years at a nominal rent for the use of about 15% of it mainly during the daytime of the week. Intergeneration programme with eco/climate focus would be developed to enable older and younger residents to learn separately as well as together. Jan then gave a detailed account on the range of activities that could be lined up there. She expected the Pier, being the first of its kind in the country, would attract some national attention.

Councillor Antonaides was pleased to note the building was re-used for a good purpose, and asked about resident engagement. Georgina Herry highlighted that the School Improvement team worked closely with the Climate Unit and sat on the Advisory Board of the Climate Alliance, both of which were already receiving input from residents. They had also engaged with school staff who had work-related or personal interest in a climate background. Jan Parnell referred to a number of workshops which focused on parents and carers. She also introduced the new green career pathways from apprenticeship, engineering to environmental study which were specifically developed to support young people engaged in the process.

On Councillor Nicole Trehy's question about ways to encourage schools to use the facilities at the Pier, Peter Haylock noted that different groups of children would be engaged through the free services provided at the Pier. Georgina Herry added that volunteer advisors with different expertises would give support on children's participation. Jan Parnell supplemented that some members of the Advisory Committee were pioneer leaders at primary and secondary schools. They had adopted a whole school approach to environmental education and become advocacy to their peers. It was hoped that the tangible benefits would help raise some funds for young people's education.

Regarding Councillor Trehy's concern about the resources dedicated to the Pier, Peter Haylock advised that the business case of the Pier was being worked out, which shall include basic cost elements like salary etc and it might not necessary incur expenditure of the Council. He undertook to provide more information in this regard after the meeting.

ACTION: Peter Haylock

In this connection, Councillor Melton asked whether the paid services would be targeted within or outside the borough. Peter Haylock advised that under the industrial strategy, key business partners and schools would be linked together to explore the climate education agenda. It was hoped that free services could be provided for the schools, to be cross-subsidised through the participation of the businesses. Location wise, the business case would have to be looked at in its entirety, covering both the south as well as the north of the borough.

On staffing, Georgina Herry said that in addition to knowledge about climate education, colleagues in the Improvement Team were experienced in running centres. The business case would focus on the programme implementation and marketing among the business partners. Jan Parnell added that the local school teachers and experts as well as national players were engaged to run some of the sessions with a view to raising funds through quality presentations.

Questions from the floor:

Helen Dell (Climate Change Commissioner) expressed concern that apart from the impressive climate education programmes, how did the schools meet the challenges of reducing carbon footprints under the whole school approach. For example, achieving carbon savings in the use of electricity and gas, and in the design of trips to schools by the wider community. Jan Parnell referred to the case studies carried out by head teachers for schools which had taken the matter seriously. They had replaced the contractors after looking at the recycling, set up student eco-council which held the senior leadership team accountable to purchasing decisions. Jan agreed that the whole school approach was a good way to strengthen climate education strategically, which might help incentivise cross-departmental collaborations, such as promoting energy efficiency among school buildings.

Helen Dell asked how the mentioned groundwork could support the Council in its 2030 objectives and motivate schools to the mindset of carbon reduction. Georgina Herry remarked that the work done so far on climate education provided the groundwork, a foundation and stable base upon which other wider issues could be addressed. This would be through a joint approach with other departments and a forward plan. She believed that some movements nationally would help strengthen their work in the same direction.

Caroline Kelly reiterated her concern about the military taking full control of the weather by 2025 and questioned the need for climate education. In response, Councillor Melton stressed that under any circumstances, there was no dispute to the values in educating the young people and the community in environmental policy. He said the borough was fortunate to be supported by qualified officers in respect of climate policy. He welcomed relevant information provided by members of the public. On Caroline's further question about the content of climate education, Peter Haylock highlighted the national curriculum which had covered different opinions and was adopted across the country. It also covered behavioural changes relating to positive living and reduction of carbon footprints.

Anna Maynard referred to the planning permission for a new pier near the Fulham Reach Boat Club, which together with the Pier under discussion, would bring massive environmental impacts aggravating the climate emergency. Jan Parnell said that the Pier building already existed. Councillor Trehy noted that planning permission was given to the new pier open by the Fulham Reach Boat Club and it had not impacted the river.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the attached presentation.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting:

- 28 March 2023

Meeting started: 7.04 pm

Meeting ended: 8.46 pm

Chair

Contact officer: Debbie Yau
Committee Co-ordinator
Corporate Services
☎: 07901 517470
E-mail: debbie.yau@lbhf.gov.uk