

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Tuesday 18 July 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Nicole Trehy (Chair), Stala Antoniadou and Jose Afonso

Other Councillors: Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) and Paul Alexander

Officers

Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment)
Hinesh Mehta (Head of Climate and Ecology)
David Gawthorpe (Team Leader, Planning and Economic Development)
Sarah Dixey (Principal Planning Officer, Planning and Economic Development)
David Woodward (Planning Officer, Planning and Economic Development)
Tim Pryce (Climate Emergency- Energy Lead)
Mark Thomlinson (Climate Engagement Lead)
John Galsworthy (Assistant Director, Parking Service)
Jim Cunningham (Climate Change Strategy and Policy Lead)
Amrita White (Committee Coordinator)
Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

Guest

Etta Dale (Solar Development Manager, Repowering London)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence has been received from Councillors Ross Melton and Laura Janes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

David Gawthorpe (Team Leader, Planning and Economic Development) provided a presentation on the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which helped ensure new homes and developments were more friendly to the environment. The new SPD offered guidance to developers, landowners, homeowners, planning officers and other interested parties when preparing and assessing planning applications. He showed slides which covered the following aspects:

- Climate change and planning
- The policy background.
- The key aims and structure of the guidance.
- The key principles of the policy
- The public consultation feedback
- The delivery timeline and next steps

Councillor Jose Afonso asked for further clarification to be provided on the main issues surrounding homes with older windows within conservation areas. David Gawthorpe noted that planners were keen to replace the traditional timber sash windows or replicate them with a modern alternative to ensure that the property was being conserved in the best way possible.

The Chair enquired if there was an opportunity for pre application discussions to be held with developers and homeowners to either build or extend their properties prior to a Planning Committee. In response David Gawthorpe explained that some pre application discussions were held, particularly with developers. He felt that these were beneficial to encourage the use of better products and offer advice on how properties could be developed in an environmentally friendly way.

In relation to the adaptability of buildings, Councillor Stala Antoniadis suggested that it would be useful to include a stipulation for the requirement of balconies for commercial buildings to improve natural ventilation and the wellbeing of employees through their working environment. In response David Gawthorpe thanked Councillor Stala Antoniadis for her suggestion and noted that this could be considered as part of the new policy for the local plan. He explained that further discussions would be held with specialist team members to ascertain if this could also be included in the SPD.

Action: David Gawthorpe

Councillor Stala Antoniadis queried if there was any scope to future proof buildings to accommodate the fitting of air source heat pumps. David Gawthorpe said that officers were striving to achieve this by encouraging new renewables on properties. Officers would ensure that there was good practice available outside of the planning remit for residents to follow and implement.

Councillor Stala Antoniadou also requested that the SPD be updated with some guidance around more affordable alternative options to double glazed sash windows such as secondary glazing, curtains, and thermal blinds for housing within the conservation areas.

Action; David Gawthorpe

The Chair queried if there was any plans for the government to introduce improved guidelines for conservation areas. In response David Gawthorpe explained that conservation areas currently did not have permitted development rights. The government was frequently updating their development rights policy, however he felt that for now it was likely that they would continue to recommend that conservation areas followed the planning process.

David Woodward (Planning Officer, Planning and Economic Development) explained that officers responded to all government consultations submitted to the Council. Therefore, this issue would be raised at the first opportunity if the Council received any proposals that included development rights for conservation areas within the borough.

Councillor Paul Alexander asked whether the Council recommended a more holistic approach for the selection of building materials and questioned how this could be achieved. David Gawthorpe explained that people had the option to choose their own products and the Council did not have the power to insist on what was being used. However, as technology progressed officers would improve the SPD, including the Council's website to promote better practice, on the use of environmentally friendly products.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) commented that the SPD offered guidance only and was not a compulsory document. He asked for further clarification to be provided on the timescales for the completion of the local plan so that some of the key issues identified could be included as mandatory requirements. David Gawthorpe said that officers would work in collaboration with the Climate Change team to review the local plan. Whilst officers had not yet committed to a timeframe for this, it was anticipated that an exercise to collect and build some evidence would take place this year with the view to begin consultation next year.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt stressed the urgency of introducing the necessary changes to the local plan. He noted that this was important to ensure that fundamental climate change issues particularly within new developments were being addressed and made mandatory in line with the Council's climate and ecological emergency target.

Action: David Gawthorpe / Jim Cunningham

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and provided a brief summary of the key points discussed. She stressed the importance of frequent pre application discussions, to encourage the use of natural materials for the development of properties going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Noted and comment on the report.
2. Gave feedback on the strategy, progress, and priorities.

5. SOLAR ENERGY AND NET ZERO IN H&F

Tim Pryce (Climate Emergency- Energy Lead) and Mark Thomlinson (Climate Engagement Lead) gave a presentation of the Council's work on solar power and community energy, and the role it played delivering the Council's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by 2030. They showed slides which covered the following aspects.

- Most of the borough's emissions came from energy used in buildings.
- Details of the net zero energy roadmap
- Benefits of solar photovoltaics and solar thermal
- Actions to grow solar energy within the borough (projects and policies)
- Details on solar energy on housing, corporate assets, and schools
- An overview of solar re-use and recycling, and related policy development
- How community energy can engage the public in the green transition

Etta Dale (Solar Development Manager, Repowering London) gave a presentation which provided an overview of the Council's partnership with Repowering London to establish the borough's first community energy group, Hammersmith & Fulham Community Energy, which enabled residents to become involved in solar schemes across the borough. These community energy schemes stretched beyond reducing carbon emissions, with examples from elsewhere in England showing they could tackle fuel poverty, generate wider interest in climate action, and build resilience by strengthening the sense of community among residents.

Repowering London currently had eight established community energy co-operatives across London involving more than 650 investors and 60 local volunteers and directors reaching hundreds of children and young adults each year. They also offered training, mentoring and work experience opportunities that empowered the residents of London to become active and engaged citizens. Thus, they were helping to build both an energy and a social infrastructure.

Councillor Stala Antoniadis thanked Etta Dale for her presentation, noting that this was a great cause being put forward. She asked for further details to be provided on the progress of the Energy Local Roupell Park (ELRP) project in Brixton. In response

Etta Dale explained that this was a new initiative available to residents living on Roupell Park Estate in Brixton. This was an opportunity to save money on your electricity bill while supporting clean solar energy generated on the rooftops of Roupell Park Estate. She noted that Repowering London had an ongoing partnership with Octopus energy and provided an outline of how the traffic and charges for electricity were applied.

Relating to the social housing retrofit strategy, Councillor Jose Afonso queried if there was scope to offer this as a trial on a specific estate within the borough for those residents to benefit from this initiative. Tim Pryce (Climate Emergency- Energy Lead) said that this could be considered as part of the wider retrofit social housing strategy. He outlined the limitations the Council faced, noting that there was currently no mechanism to sell electricity directly to residents.

The Chair asked how Repowering London was positioned within the larger industry for solar panels where rogue trading was still a cause for concern. Etta Dale felt that the industry had improved in the more recent years, however there were still many challenges being identified. She highlighted that Repowering London had been working closely with its own trusted supplier for 8 years who also provided an operations and maintenance service to Repowering London.

The Chair asked if there was potential for Repowering London to expand its relationship with the current supplier to include domestic installations. Etta Dale commented that this was currently being progressed as a key consideration within the retrofit work that was already being carried out by Repowering London.

The Chair commented that there were many challenges faced due to the shortage of skilled workers and asked for further details to be provided on the training programme executed. Etta Dale commented that she was pleased to note that Repowering London were working with Newham College on apprenticeships. She provided details of how this would work, highlighting that community instalments would be supplied to Newham College to give students an opportunity to work on these.

A resident thanked the Chair for the invite to the Committee. She asked how resident engagement would be carried out within the community. Etta Dale provided an overview of how engagement within the local community would be executed, noting that this would take place in collaboration with volunteer led co-operatives. There was also funding available for public engagement events. In addition, information leaflets would also be made available to local food banks and residents.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentations and the members of the public in attendance. She noted that she was very excited by the development of this initiative and requested that this be amplified as much as possible and members be kept updated of any community engagement events.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Noted and comment on the report.
2. Gave feedback on the strategy, progress, and priorities.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting will take place on 21st November 2023

The Chair said that she would like an update and presentation on food waste recycling for the next meeting and noted that if there were any further requests to contact the Chair and Amrita White.

Meeting started: 7pm
Meeting ended: 8:30pm

Chair

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