

Environment Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 1 October 2019 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Leanne Werner (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Radha Burgess
Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Damian O'Brien
Councillor Michael Situ

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet member for a Sustainable Camden

OFFICER & PARTNER SUPPORT: Iskander Erzini Vernoit, Bill Perry, Caoimhe Basketter from Southwark Extinction Rebellion
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Tom Flynn gave apologies.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on 23 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

5. DRAFT CARBON REDUCTION STRATEGY ROAD MAP

Climate Emergency Strategy draft road map

Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency, and Stuart Robinson-Marshall, Head of Sustainability & Business Development, presented the Climate Emergency Strategy draft road map.

The cabinet member explained that the road map was a follow up from the Climate Summit, held in July 2019, attended by councillors, officers and community representatives. A strategy to tackle the Climate Emergency had been planned for this autumn, however the work for this is taking longer than expected as good engagement is needed, and some aspects of the strategy are more complex and complicated than anticipated.

The council is now working with partners on this, including some of the many environmental NJOs in Southwark. Officers are also revising data. The Climate Emergency strategy will now be finished by next summer with a launch. The roadmap being presented to the Commission is focused on involving outside stakeholders and agreeing a process for developing a strategy – with the road map going to the 29 October Cabinet.

The chair invited comments and questions:

- I. A member pointed out the embedded carbon of a car is half of its life time carbon expenditure. What is the council's approach to switching to LED lights, bearing this in mind? He sought reassurance that the council is replacing light bulbs as they reach the end of their life, rather than useable lighting tubes being replaced. Officers said they follow the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle environmental maxim. They are replacing as they reach the end of life.
- II. Can we increase the speed given the urgency? The cabinet member said the council are going for a strong pace rather than haste. Officers said that they will be taking carbon reduction actions as they go forward.
- III. Some of the parts of this report are similar to a previous report; is the council recycling an old report? Officers assured members this is a new report however some points made in previous carbon reduction plans are being reused as they are still relevant.
- IV. The council has lots of strategy and policies: what takes precedence? The cabinet member said that tackling the Climate Emergency is something that needs all aspects of the council to work on and in terms of looking through the prism we are considering adding a concurrent to look at climate emergency when strategies are developed, in the same way that currently report authors have to consider the financial and legal implications of major plans.
- V. Ought this to be more of an engagement rather than consultation process? The cabinet member agreed and said he was looking forward to hearing

more about Camden's approach.

- VI. How can the council use a carrot and stick approach; can the council incentivise change as well as discouraging emissions? The cabinet member said that the strategy will be looking at raising money to invest in positive approaches. This will be linked to the budget process, considering where the council can invest and raise money.
- VII. The paper agenda drop by car was highlighted as an area where carbon could be saved. It is possible to sign up for electronic agendas.
- VIII. The carbon embedded in the built environment is massive; will the carbon strategy relook at Planning? Yes, Planning and Regulation is part of the Climate Strategy work-streams. A point was raised at Council Assembly about the volume of carbon offsets paid by developers. The cabinet member said there are challenges here as the council do need to build more housing. Land is restricted so this means building higher. Blocks of flats need lifts; these generate higher carbon that is harder to reduce.
- IX. The Tree Plan and Biodiversity plan have been recently out for consultation. They lack strong links with the Climate Emergency and a sense of vision and urgency. We do need to adapt and change these policies in light of the Climate Emergency declaration and they could be retrofitted.
- X. Why are trees not in the roadmap as a method of reducing emissions and tackling biodiversity loss? It is implicit. The Climate Emergency strategy will incorporate work on tackling biodiversity loss, as well as carbon reduction.
- XI. Can the council contract with Interserve be revisited? This is relevant to products going in and out, and this being audited. The FM contract can be renegotiated; however it is always easier to make significant changes when a contract is up for renewal. The Head of Sustainability is on the steering group.
- XII. Can the Climate Strategy contain a list of all the major strategies, policies and commissioned contracts, and when these can be influenced? These will be identified as part of the plan.
- XIII. Do we have a planning carbon rating system for developments? Do we have a carbon offsets fund? A carbon rating system is a good idea worth pursuing. There is a carbon offset fund. We are deciding how to use this money; much of this is due to come on completion of schemes.

Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet member for a Sustainable Camden presented on Camden Council's approach to the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Councillor Adam Harrison explained that Camden recently came to the end of the 2010 carbon reduction plan. The council therefore needed to update their plans, particularly given recent data and the growing sense of urgency. In order to take this forward they held a Citizen Assembly. Previously Camden had done something similar with the New

Camden Plan. The council used community researchers to recruit 50 participants. The assembly met over a number of weekends. To begin with citizens had presentations on the climate science. Then the assembly looked at three themes: local, neighbourhood, and borough. This was followed by a day of debate, which culminated in 17 recommendations, which were then put to Council Assembly.

The chair invited questions:

- I. Is 50 the right amount of participants to give this legitimacy given the 1/4 million population of an inner London Borough? Councillor Adam Harrison said he thought this number was about right as the citizens represented the diversity of the borough and this size of group does allow deliberation. Their deliberations were also informed by the results of a wider public consultation exercise.
- II. Do you think the citizens and public were ambitious? Yes, they had gone through a process of understanding the science and awareness of the councils remit and powers; consequently they are more committed and engaged now.
- III. Do you have a climate youth council? Yes we have secondary school 'sustainers'. We also did a consultation which engaged 500 people and there are climate change business alliances. All these groups fed into the citizen assembly.

Iskander Erzini Vernoit, Bill Perry, Caoimhe Basketter from Southwark Extinction Rebellion (XR)

The campaigners brought with them a number of letters with proposals from residents to tackle climate change; they offered to share the contents with the council. These were gathered in Peckham, when XR had an open booth.

XR said the council do need to bear in mind increasing evidence that the situation is growing even more grave; the recent announcement on sea temperature rises indicates the growing scale of the Climate Emergency and the risk of runaway climate change. They said government needs to act with the same sense of emergency as previously taken for the Second World War.

The campaigners said that they have been able to mobilise many local people, including 40 citizens undertaking Direct Action. An important part of their work is visiting groups to tell the truth about the Climate Emergency, which often shocks people. The movement is building and serious. There are many citizens behind this.

They commented that it is important that the Climate Emergency roadmap and strategy engages well and is cohesive with other policies. This needs to include retrofitting our buildings and revisiting Regeneration. Building new buildings and knocking down old ones releases an enormous amount of carbon and we do not have time to recapture this over 50 years.

The chair invited comments and questions

- I. How can we harness the power of engaged citizens from XR and beyond? XR said

that they are willing and able to engage with groups on this agenda.

- II. Officers said that they will be working on community engagement with Jessica Leach. XR will be invited to join the co design group cited in the roadmap.
- III. There was a suggestion to start with tangible green method to reduce carbon, which people want and understand, such as installing solar panels.
- IV. The cabinet member raised the issue of persuading residents on the importance of plans which will reduce emissions, such as a borough wide Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ). He asked if XR could help with this. XR highlighted the issue of climate justice. The French approach alienated the masses who had to pay raised taxes, and yet were dependant on cars in rural areas because of a lack of alternatives. We cannot have similar situation here where the rich can buy electric cars. Mass engagement is key and things like cheaper public transport.
- V. A member commented that when proposing CPZs the council do need to make the moral case; for example the consequences of emissions on public health and children's lungs. The council also we need to bear in mind the practical problems of the lack of buses. The council need to make the use of cars more painful, and at the same time we must increase bus routes, public transport and ease of walking and cycling. We do need to take people on the journey but also be brave if we truly believe people will come around in the medium term. Other members pointed out that communities where it is easy to travel by walking and cycling are the better for people in many ways.
- VI. Members asked about engagement with schools. The cabinet member said that there are discussions regarding purchasing hybrid coaches, and with Dulwich College on moving to an electric fleet.
- VII. Member said that the council ought to look at wealth disparity and that the better off are polluting the less well off. There is data on this that we need to understand and communicate. The council ought to rethink the right to car spaces and the automatic use of land for roads and driving. Councillor Adam Harrison said that Camden did a mapping exercise that demonstrated that more wealthy residents in Hampstead had higher car ownership, but better air quality, demonstrating this is an equalities issue. A member said there is similar data on car ownership and wealth disparity in Southwark; some of the highest levels of car ownership are in Dulwich. There was a recent piece of journalism looking at the rental value of a parking place , which valued this at several thousand pounds per year, yet residents are charged a fraction of this. Cycle parking space is also charged at a higher rate compared with the larger space a car uses, and yet has a much more positive impact on air quality. Road user charging is another lever.
- VIII. Play streets, and the creation of linear parks for walking, cycling and playing are an example of roads being used for more socially and environmentally friendly use. These are likely to particularly benefit poorer communities with lower car ownership and worse air quality. Other cities have started to create car free zones based on social and environmental equity.

- IX. Camden also looked at workplace car parking charging. Members asked the cabinet member if the council is still giving estate car parking to employees. Some staff park in estates, do a days work and return. The cabinet member said this is subject to extensive consultation with the Unions and linked to essential car user allowance. Some car use is needed e.g. social workers; however it is likely other uses are not.
- X. XR said that the council need to look at empty homes in the borough. Officers said that one of the levers open to the council to discourage this is charging double the council tax, and this has been enacted. The council has utilised this power; however they will return to this problem to see what more can be done.

RESOLVED

A scrutiny report will be drafted to respond to the Climate Emergency roadmap, and sent to the 29 October cabinet.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.