

## ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 13 July 2021 at 7.00 pm at

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)  
Councillor Adele Morris (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Renata Hamvas  
Councillor Graham Neale  
Councillor Leanne Werner

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Helen Dennis, Cabinet Member for the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Chris Page, Climate Emergency Director  
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Tom Flynn and Leo Pollak gave apologies for absence and Councillor Renata Hamvas gave apologies for lateness. Councillor James Coldwell attended as a substitute.

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

There was none.

### 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION

There were none.

### 4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 5. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Councillor Helen Dennis, Cabinet Member for the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development, presented and then took questions, with assistance from Chris Page, Climate Emergency Director.

Members raised the following issues:

- The cabinet lead agreed with members that assistance for private landlords to retrofit existing housing is an area that warrants more active exploration. There is a potential tool for the council to influence this through the Licensing scheme for rented property. Another opportunity is promotion and support for landlords' to make use of government green grants when they come online.
- It was clarified that the £101 million pounds referenced in the Climate Emergency Strategy refers to money already spent on capital projects, such as parks and active travel, to address the climate emergency to date. There is an additional £25 million committed, but as yet unallocated, to be spent on capital works, to address the Climate Emergency.
- The Greens Homes Grant is being used in a Southwark Tower block to retrofit and improve insulation, including double glazing. A Green Home Grant has also been successfully awarded for council street properties to do insulation. The Green Home Grant scheme has now closed but the council will be looking at further information and support if new programmes come online.
- The Climate Change Director was asked about the three biggest actions planned to tackle the Climate Emergency and responded that because everything is interlinked it is a challenge to separate out individual actions, however there is a big focus on less driving and getting gas out of people's homes. The method for removing gas boilers include bringing forward heat networks, with three pilot water sourced heat pumps networks in the pipeline, and linking more households to South East London Combined Heat and Power (SELCHP).The strategy sets out a commitment to reduce energy and encourages linking to renewable energy, as set out in the Greener Building theme and Renewable theme.

- Work on adaptation is to follow, with a planned strategy that will include flood defences. The plan is to eventually will bring the work on the Climate Emergency and Adaptation together, however the council's priority was tackling the Climate Emergency.
- The Cabinet lead said that the New Southwark Plan (NSP) amendments that are quite considerable. However the NSP will go further with an Energy policy, which is most significant. There is also a programme of work to include embodied carbon.
- Some commission members commented that the strategy was wordy, with a lot of 'exploring' and 'highlights', while other members praised the themes, clarity on where responsibility for emissions lies and the short, medium and long term goals. The rolling Action Plan was commended. The cabinet member was asked if there would be an increase in SMART targets, deadlines and a communication plan.
- The cabinet lead she had tasked officers with communicating the plan. The Climate Change Director added that there is an education strand, commenting that people tend to be interested and care about the environment but there are other demands on people's time and energy, so education can be about providing accessible tools. He said the council have found it easier to engage with some sections of the population rather than others. The cabinet member said she would take away the point on SMART objectives.
- Members commented that some of the green industrial jobs promised by the government, such as wind, may not come to pass and asked about local plans. It was explained that there will be a particular emphasis on ensuring there are jobs and capacity to deliver the retrofit programmes. The number of jobs to retrofit is massive and there is a skills shortage. Jobs are also expected with trees and reforestation. The construction industry is also significant and this is being made a centre for green recovery. The cabinet lead for the environment explained that she is working with the cabinet member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres, Cllr Ochere, on this agenda. The potential for linking up with local colleges and universities was discussed.
- Commission members were assured that retrofitting plans do include the Victorian houses, including those in conservation

areas, and there are plans for a Heritage SPD to facilitate this.

- The outlay for installing heat pumps was discussed, given the potential for carbon and financial savings, but significant installation costs. The council does not yet have a financial model in place to deliver this and is conscious of the financial impact on leaseholders.
- The commitment to Social Justice in the strategy was referenced with a query on its purpose. It was explained that this will be taken forward by thinking about co- benefits; to the environment and people, and reducing inequalities.
- Members sounded a note of caution on the plans to expand the burning of waste in SELCHP, with concerns about this creating a market for waste, and the associated emissions. The cabinet member undertook to keep an eye on this.
- Comments were made by a member that the food section in the strategy is thin on reducing carbon through practices such as going vegan, and the cabinet member agreed there is room to explore encouraging meat and dairy free diets.
- The timeline for food, garden collection and grey water being optimally utilised was touched upon, with a report indicated.
- Soutwark's capacity to build to Passivhaus and generate solar through PV was discussed. The cabinet member said that there are plans to build to Passivhaus standards, however construction will only get so far unless there is a connection to an air or ground source pump or heat network. There is also an administrative cost to Passivhaus.
- The commission asked about the manifesto commitment to deliver Community Energy. The cabinet lead and officer said previously the figures did not stack up for housing without the Feed in Tariff (FIT), however this will be looked at again and include community buildings.
- There was a discussion on the Urban Greening Factor and importance of having the capacity to deliver this in planning as required by the London Plan.

## 6. ENERGY SPARKS

Dr Claudia Towner, Energy Sparks CEO and Programme Director gave a presentation virtually demoted from the website: [www.energysparks.uk](http://www.energysparks.uk) .

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

What schools can you work with?

- Energy Sparks can work with any school and have worked with a range of school types including Local Authority, Academies and Independent Schools.

How do you access energy consumption data?

- Energy data for Local Authority schools can be accessed through council officers. For academies sometime the data can be accessed through the Local Authority, other times via the Academy network.

How engaged are schools?

- There have been no schools dropping out, and there is ongoing work.

The virtual connection to the presenter was then lost and so Dr Claudia Towner provided the answers to the following outstanding questions via email:

Some schools had a 30% energy saving, whereas some didn't have much. Why was that?

- The savings potential for schools depends on how well they've managed their energy before joining Energy Sparks, and their building/estate infrastructure. Many schools have high levels of energy waste through leaving their heating running outside of school hours. These schools can easily save 20% simply by better heating controls. Other schools may already have effective heating controls in use, so they

will need to work harder to achieve more significant savings.

Could you say more about your research into Active Travel for school journeys and actions?

- This is a new area of development for Energy Sparks. This summer we've trialled a travel to school carbon footprint app and will be doing further development on this tool and accompanying resources prior to a wider rollout in spring 2022. The aim is to make students and school staff more aware of the carbon footprint of their journey to school, and then support schools and their students and staff to make more active and sustainable travel choices.

Energy Sparks also provided some additional information, including a flyer and some case studies, which provide an overview of Energy Sparks work in schools. These are published with the agenda.

#### **7. SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT: AIR QUALITY (PART 2)**

The report was agreed.

#### **8. SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT: ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

The report was agreed.

#### **9. WORK PROGRAMME**

The commission considered the work programme for the year and the following points were made:

- Follow up on outstanding cabinet responses to the Air Quality reports of the last two administrative years would be beneficial, particularly the Emissions Based Parking policy and the proposal for a Borough Wide CPZ, while ensuring this commission covers new ground.
- Planning remains a concern, particularly implementing policy standards on the environment. Members questioned if councillors are collectively pushing hard enough for better carbon savings at planning committees or too readily accepting carbon offset payments.
- SELCHP's expansion as a source of heat and the associated increase in the use of waste, and emissions, ought to be scrutinised.

- The development of District Heating Networks, and in particular the pilot water source heat pumps ought to be explored, as well as capacity and costs associated with the installation of Air Source Heat pumps.
- SE24 will be attending the next meeting on Community Energy and it would be helpful to hear from a school with solar.
- Post FIT funding for Solar PV and Community Energy ought to be explored.
- Members also noted the substantial sums identified in the Climate Emergency Strategy that will be required to meet net zero and particular that certain groups, such as leaseholders, will need consideration on help available to meet capital costs.

The chair invited members to suggest stakeholders to take evidence from to support the review and potential co-optees with the right expertise to join the commission, noting the importance of diversity and inclusion.

The commission asked that thanks and appreciation be put on the record for Jeremy Leach's valuable contribution as a co-optee on the Environment Scrutiny Commission for the previous two years.