

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

16 March 2022

Commenced: 4.30 pm

Terminated: 5.55 pm

Present: Councillors Boyle (Chair), B Holland, Jones, Mills and Pearce

In Attendance:

Ian Saxon	Director, Place
Emma Varnam	Assistant Director, Place
Garry Parker	Head of Waste Management and Fleet Services
Graham Hall	Climate and Energy Manager
Christina Morton	Environmental Development Officer
Lindsay Johnson	Head of Asset Strategy

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Affleck, Cooper and Patrick

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group held on 17 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.

31. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

The Panel received a presentation from the Climate and Energy Manager in relation to sustainable procurement. Reducing waste and procuring sustainably formed a key part of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Members were informed that the Council was committed to working with its procurement partner, STAR, to ensure that it procured goods and services in a sustainable manner. The Climate Manager explained that the Council was in early stage discussions with procurement partners to procure sustainably. It was highlighted that there were a number of advantages to procuring sustainably, including benefits to local employment, biodiversity net gain, carbon reduction, social value and resource and waste reduction.

A member of the STAR procurement team would attend the next meeting of the group to inform Members how they intended to ensure sustainability in the supply chain.

RESOLVED

- i. That the content of the presentation be noted.
- ii. That a representative from STAR procurement attend the next meeting of the Group.

32. DECARBONISATION OF THE PUBLIC ESTATE UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation from the Environmental Development Officer updating Members on the steps being taken by the Council to decarbonise the Tameside estate. The project formed part of the Greater Manchester Five Year Plan and a wider initiative to de-carbonise buildings across the city region.

Members were informed that Phase 1 of the Scheme had seen £1 billion of grants made to public sector bodies, including schools and hospitals, to fund both energy efficiency and low carbon heat

upgrades. It was explained that Tameside Council was initially awarded £2.5 million in funding to improve the energy efficiency and decarbonise 11 Council buildings; eight corporate and three schools. Additional funding had also been provided to support three further insulation schemes.

Details of the measures undertaken as part of Phase 1 were outlined and included insulation, draught proofing, improvements to Building Management Systems (BMS), solar PV, solar thermal, air source heat pumps and window replacements. It was expected that these measures would reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 355.86 tonnes CO₂e per annum. All of the Phase 1 measures would need to be delivered by early June 2022.

The Environmental Development Officer advised the Group that applications for Phase 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme had opened on 6 October 2021 and closed on 3 November 2021. Members were informed that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) had compiled a joint bid and Tameside had put forward six buildings; two corporate, two sport's trust and two schools. These related to Stalybridge Civic Hall, Clarence Arcade, Medlock Leisure Centre, Active Hyde, St John's Primary School and Stalyhill Primary School.

Funding requirements for Phase 3 of the Decarbonisation Scheme were different to those of Phase 1 and it was explained that as part of this phase, a building's heating system had to be old and in need of replacement. There was also a match-funding requirement. The Council, as part of the GMCA bid, had applied for £3 million of funding with an eligible grant of £1.95 million (65%), requiring match funding of £1 million (35%).

Members were pleased that Tameside's recent Phase 3 bid had been successful subject to a report that was currently proceeding through the Council's governance process. The request for match funding would receive a decision at Executive Cabinet on 30 March 2022 and, subject to approval, the six schemes would need to be delivered by 31 March 2023.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

33. UPDATE ON ENERGY MARKETS AND PRICE INCREASES

The Panel received a presentation from the Environmental Development Officer updating Members on the energy market and looming price increases.

Reasons for increasing energy prices were outlined to the Group and included:

- A cold start to Spring 2021 in the UK and Europe which had depleted gas storage further following a cold winter;
- Increased flows from Russia and more Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) cargo arrivals to Europe were expected, but failed to materialise;
- Unplanned outages and lack of wind to power turbines during last summer compounded existing problems;
- European storage levels entering the winter season were 15 per cent below the long-term average;
- Conflict between Russia and Ukraine led to concerns that supplies from the country would be disrupted, further pushing up prices;
- Germany halted approval of the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline; and
- The energy price cap had been raised by the regulator, Ofgem.

Members were informed that the increasing cost of energy would have a significant impact on the Council's corporate accounts and schools on contracts. In relation to gas, the Environmental Development Officer explained that the Council purchased gas through the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework, and had already been purchased up to 31 March 2022. This price was currently fixed and was not affected by the current market conditions.

Gas purchasing for 2022/23 had commenced in September 2021 and the Group were informed that prices were expected to rise by 105 per cent in April 2022 compared to April 2021.

In relation to electricity, the Council purchased through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) framework and this had already been purchased up to 31 March 2022 and was not currently affected by the current market conditions. The purchasing of electricity for 2022/23 had begun up to a year in advance and it was expected that electricity costs for the Council would increase by 50 per cent for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. It was advised that these figures were based on information available today and were therefore subject to change.

Information was then provided in relation to the help available for the borough's residents to cope with the increasing cost of energy bills. The assistance currently available included:

- All domestic electricity customers receiving £200 off their energy bills from October 2022;
- The Warm Home Discount that provided a one off discount of £140 over the winter period; and
- Cold Weather Payments that paid out £25 for each seven day period that average temperatures in the area were zero degrees or below.

In addition to financial help from Government, residents would be encouraged to make their homes warmer through insulation and draught proofing and ensure that their bills were accurate by having a smart meter installed. Other smaller measures including turning down the thermostat by one degree, which could save the average household £55 annually.

Details of two schemes that could help the borough's most vulnerable residents were highlighted, the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) and the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme. The LEAP was available to residents who were struggling to heat their homes and a visit from an outreach worker could suggest small measures, including switching energy supplier, benefits and debt advice, applying for the Warm Home Discount and a referral for a free boiler in certain circumstances.

Members were informed that the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme was still running and referrals were being taken until the end of March for an end of June completion date. The scheme was targeted at those residents with a combined gross annual household income of less than £30,000 and an EPC rating of band E, F or G who could then qualify for free energy saving measures. Energy efficiency measures included insulation, low carbon heating, replacement of single glazed windows and installation of solar PV panels.

In order to promote the schemes and funding available to residents, Members were keen that the Council's Communication's Team highlighted them through the various social media channels. It was also requested that a member of the Environmental Development team address local groups to detail the help available to those individuals who did not necessarily use the internet or social media.

Concerning the increasing energy costs faced by the Council, Members sought clarity on what the authority was doing to try to improve its energy sustainability. The Environmental Development Officer advised that as part of the Go Neutral Scheme the Council was working to identify sites on its estate that could incorporate renewable energy solutions. Further information on Go Neutral and the potential sites across the estate would be brought to the next meeting of the Group.

RESOLVED

- i. That the content of the presentation be noted.**
- ii. That a presentation on the Go Neutral Scheme be brought to the next meeting of the Group.**

34. STATEMENT FROM UNITED UTILITIES

The Group received a written statement from the Head of Stakeholder Relations at United Utilities in relation to Member concern about discharge of micro-plastics and sewage into the River Tame. Members had requested that United Utilities address the Group in relation to their concerns but the water company had suggested that this meeting take place after April 2022 to allow new, verified data concerning environmental performance across the North West to be made available.

RESOLVED

- i. That the content of the statement be noted.**
- ii. That a representative from United Utilities attend the next meeting of the Group to address Member concerns regarding the discharge of micro-plastics and sewage into the River Tame.**

35. WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation on waste and recycling from the Head of Waste Management and Fleet Services.

Members were informed that from 31 January 2022, the Council had launched a change in bin collection frequency across the borough. Despite some minor teething problems, it was advised that all rounds had been completed with very little service failure. After 12 weeks, a review of the new collection pattern would be undertaken, checking tonnage levels and any complaints received.

The Head of Waste Management reported that the Council had now introduced charging for wheeled bins where they needed to be replaced. This was saving the Council around £5,000 per week however, hardship control measures were in place for those residents who could not afford to purchase a bin.

Regarding the borough's doorstep recycling rate, Members were advised that the current rate stood at 48 per cent. It was highlighted that this did not mean that 52 per cent of waste went to landfill as a proportion of the non-recyclable waste was sorted by a system called Aladdin and used to generate energy that the Council received an income from. Whilst the Council had achieved a peak recycling rate of 63 per cent in June 2021, often this was seasonal and reflected an increase in garden waste during the summer period.

An update was provided in relation to the Council's efforts to green its fleet of vehicles. The Fleet Replacement Strategy had gone to Board on 2 March 2022 and would then proceed to Executive Cabinet for approval. If approved, the Council would then commence replacing its older and more polluting vehicles. Currently, the Council had 106 vehicles and as part of its strategy to introduce ultra-low emission vehicles, it would also look to reduce its fleet size.

The Group were informed that introducing fully electric lifting systems on refuse vehicles would result in a seven per cent fuel saving for the Council. In relation to replacing refuse vehicles, it was explained that a standard vehicle cost £190,000 compared to around £400,000 for a fully electric truck. Each new vehicle was expected to last eight years and 32 would be required in total. Whilst a standard diesel vehicle did two miles to the gallon, it was emphasised that a fully electric vehicle would be more efficient and cost effective over the longer term.

A new car leasing scheme had been launched by the Council on 1 March 2022 and all vehicles available under the scheme would have a maximum emission of 120g/Km. In addition, the new mayoral car would be a hybrid/electric vehicle.

The Chair and Assistant Director of Place informed Members that Garry Parker, Head of Waste Management and Fleet Services would be leaving Tameside to take up an Assistant Director position at Bolton Council. They extended their thanks to Garry for his hard work and support at the Group and Members echoed these comments.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

36. UPDATE FROM TASK GROUPS

The Group received a presentation from the Climate and Energy Manager updating Members on the work being undertaken by the Climate Change and Environment task groups. The task groups comprised both elected Members and officers with each meeting four times since the last meeting of the Group in November 2021.

The five task groups comprised influencing others; homes, buildings & workspaces; travel & transport; greenspace; and reducing waste and procuring sustainably. The Climate Manager highlighted that there was overlap between the five groups and that they were designed to work collaboratively rather than in silos. Each task group would consult the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan; monitor the progress of activity against it and feedback to the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group. Work would also be undertaken outside of this Group to progress the aims outlined in the Action Plan.

A RAG chart detailing the activity of each group against the Action Plan had been devised. The vast majority of activities across the five groups were rated as either amber or green indicating that progress was being made and the Climate Manager thanked Members for their positive contributions to each group.

Details of the activities from the five task groups would be relayed at Member briefing sessions. This would ensure that all Members were aware of the action being taken by the Council to achieve its environmental and climate targets following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in February 2020.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

37. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

CHAIR