

## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

15 March 2023

**Commenced: 4.35pm**

**Terminated: 6.15pm**

**Present:** Councillors Boyle (Chair), Affleck, Jones, Mills, Newton, Pearce, Roderick and Turner

**In Attendance:**

Emma Varnam	Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Jo Oliver	Head of Waste Management and Fleet Services
Gary Mongan	Regulatory Services Manager, Environmental Services
Christina Morton	Environmental Development Officer
Jemma Parkinson	Area Engagement Lead, United Utilities
Mark Sewell	Wastewater Catchment Manager, United Utilities
Chris Matthews	Head of Regional Engagement, United Utilities

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor B Holland

### 25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group held on 16 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### 27. AMENDMENT TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with the Council's constitution, the Chair advised Members of a change in the order of business to the published agenda.

### 28. GREATER MANCHESTER GREEN CITY REGION UPDATE

The Chair, Councillor Boyle, gave a verbal update in respect of the Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership. Members were informed that the last meeting had taken place on 10 February 2023 and updates were provided in relation to the Five Year Environment Plan as well as those areas where targets were not currently being met.

It was highlighted that Greater Manchester was taking part in the Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Heat Network Zoning Pilot which would inform national policy development for the future use and growth of heat networks to reduce carbon emissions.

### 29. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Group received an update from the Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods in relation to the Council's Climate and Environment Action Plan. The five priority areas of the Action Plan were; greenspace & biodiversity; homes, workspaces & council buildings; influencing others; reducing consumption & procuring sustainably; and travel & transport.

A number of working groups related to each priority area that had been established involving Members and officers were currently unable to meet regularly due to a number of vacancies within

the Place Directorate. However, the Chair of the Group, the Assistant Director and Environmental Development Officer continued to meet with the lead officer from each group.

The slides showed the project status against each task area using a RAG rating system.

Members were encouraged to email any questions in relation to the Action Plan to the Assistant Director and the Chair requested that they be sighted.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the update be noted.**

### **30. DECARBONISATION OF THE PUBLIC ESTATE UPDATE**

The Group received a presentation from the Environmental Development Officer updating Members on the steps being taken by the Council to decarbonise buildings across the Tameside estate.

Members were informed that Phase 1 of the Scheme had seen £1 billion made available to public sector bodies, including schools and hospitals, to fund both energy efficiency and low carbon heat upgrades. As part of Phase 1, the Council had been awarded £2.5 million to decarbonise 14 buildings across the borough.

Measures undertaken included insulation, draught proofing, improvements to building management systems (BMS), solar PV, solar thermal, air source heat pumps and window replacements. It was anticipated that these measures would reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 355.86 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per annum. All of these measures had been completed in June 2022.

The Environmental Development Officer advised the Group that as part of Phase 3a of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, Tameside Council had been awarded £1.5 million. Under Phase 3a there was a match-funding requirement meaning the total project value was £2.3 million.

As part of Phase 3a, four buildings were currently undergoing decarbonisation works. The works related to Active Hyde, Active Medlock, Stalyhill Junior School and St John's Primary School. Measures included the installation of air source heat pumps, LED lighting, insulation, BMS measures and solar PV. In total, the measures would eliminate 6,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon over the 20-year project lifecycle. All of the money had to be drawn down by the end of March 2023 and work was underway at pace.

A further round of buildings in the Council's estate were undergoing decarbonisation surveys in readiness for any future funding rounds or opportunities. The four buildings currently being surveyed were Active Copley, Denton town hall, Greswell Primary School and Ryecroft Hall.

Members queried if decarbonisation projects could be undertaken without grant funding and it was explained that due to Council budgetary pressures only those schemes that were invest to save were likely to be successful as part of a business case.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

### **31. GREATER MANCHESTER CLEAN AIR PLAN UPDATE**

The Group received a presentation from the Regulatory Services Manager updating Members on the Clean Air Plan for Greater Manchester.

Members were informed that government had mandated Greater Manchester to tackle illegal levels of air pollution on some local roads. It was estimated that poor air quality contributed to nearly 1,200 premature deaths across the city region each year. Consequently, local authorities and the

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) were committed to cleaning up the air that residents breathed. The aim was to achieve this in a way that did not jeopardise jobs, livelihoods and businesses.

Initially, Greater Manchester was required to have a city region wide clean air charging zone, but following the covid-19 pandemic government agreed that this scheme would not be implemented on 30 May 2022. It was explained that the pandemic had resulted in significant vehicle supply chain issues, resulting in rising vehicles prices and a cost of living crisis. The original Clean Air Plan could therefore have caused significant financial hardship and would not have met the government's legal direction (issued before the pandemic) to tackle harmful nitrogen dioxide levels on local roads by 2024.

Greater Manchester had been directed by government to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide limits on local roads in the "shortest possible time" and by 2026 at the latest. The Regulatory Services Manager advised the Group the new investment-led Clean Air Plan would not include a charging Clean Air Zone. Instead, resources would be targeted at those specific areas that modelling showed would have exceedances in 2025, including parts of Bury, Manchester and Salford.

In relation to vehicles, it was explained that 90 per cent of Greater Manchester's bus fleet already met government emission standards due to funding from the government Clean Air Bus Fund. Further funding would mean that 100 new zero emission buses would be rolled out when the first regulated bus services were introduced in Wigan and Bury from September 2023. An additional 170 zero emission buses were due to run from Stockport by 2024.

Concerning other vehicles, it was explained that £120 million government Clear Air funding would be used to clean up the most polluting vehicles that travelled frequently on the most polluted local roads. Local policies and regulatory measures would be reviewed to speed up fleet upgrades. The cameras that had already been installed as part of the original Clean Air Zone proposals would be used to send letters to those driving non-compliant vehicles, advising them of the support available to upgrade.

Details of the current status of the proposals were provided to Members and it was advised that in January 2023 the government had requested additional evidence to support Greater Manchester's case for an investment-led, non-charging Clean Air Plan. Initial evidence had been submitted demonstrating how zero-emission buses would help meet Greater Manchester's legal limits for nitrogen dioxide.

Further evidence had been requested relating to modelling to understand how Greater Manchester's case for an investment-led, non-charging plan performed against the benchmark of a charging Clean Air Zone to address the nitrogen dioxide exceedances identified in central Manchester and Salford.

The Regulatory Services Manager informed the Group that the additional evidence, which required detailed modelling, would be provided to government by the end of 2023. Once formal government feedback on the Clean Air Plan had been received, timescales for a public consultation on the plan would be announced.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

## **32. WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE**

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

Members were informed that the government proposed to implement a deposit return scheme on plastic bottles and steel and aluminium cans from October 2025. It was likely that individuals would

receive 20 pence on cans and plastic bottles if returned to a shop with reverse vending machines. Whilst it was hoped the scheme would reduce littering, it was explained that the Council would lose some income from good value, high quality plastic and cans being returned through the scheme.

Proposals to extend producer responsibility for packing waste would see producers charged according to the amount of packaging materials they placed on the market, which would generate a fund that would then be allocated to local authorities. Local authorities would then receive financial support for collection, recycling, treatment, and disposal of packaging with payments being based on modelled costs. The first issue of extended producer responsibility (EPR) model outputs were expected in Spring 2023 with guidance on efficiency and effectiveness in Summer 2023.

Details of the requirement for separate weekly food waste collections from 2025 were outlined to Members. Under the proposals, all households including flats and hard to access properties would be included. The Council would undertake a TEEP assessment to ascertain if its current collection system was acceptable. If the Council were required to change its system, then funding would be available through the new burdens fund.

The reporting officer explained that as part of the Environment Act, businesses and schools would be required to have separate weekly food waste collections. It was expected to be introduced in October 2025 but currently it was unclear how the scheme would be resourced.

Concerning the Wider Waste Strategy for the Council, it was advised that Waste Services was currently awaiting further guidance from DEFRA on the National Waste Strategy. It was likely that the Council would need additional resources and to introduce champions to monitor, encourage and promote the work.

An update in relation to progress on waste and recycling in Tameside was provided and it was highlighted that the number of waste complaints had declined from a peak in Spring 2022 following the introduction of three weekly bin collection in April of that year.

A review of bin routes was currently being undertaken and the requirement for any additional resources would be discussed with crews. The changes were likely to be implemented on 23 June 2023 but the majority of resident's collections would remain the same. It was advised that there would be some short-term disruption as the new rounds took effect, but would ultimately lead to a more reliable service and accommodate growing property numbers in the borough.

Following a review of assisted bin collections, it was reported that the number required across the borough would reduce by 60 per cent following a scoping exercise carried out by Waste Services to understand the properties that still required them. Given the forecasted significant drop, Members were keen that those households that required them still received an assisted collection.

Members were advised that residents would now be required to pay for new or replacement bins. The capacity of recycling bins had also been increased to 240 litres, giving the Council more scope if required to collect additional materials in future, such as plastic pots, tubs and trays.

A summary of recycling rates for the borough was provided and showed that the overall recycling rate for 2021/22 was 52.6 per cent. In quarter one of 2022/23 the recycling rate was 54.6 per cent and reflected the increase in garden waste tonnages. Data for quarter two would be submitted shortly because there was a six-month delay in reporting.

The Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods proposed that Members of the Group undertook a site visit to the Longley Lane Waste and Recycling Centre in Gatley.

## **RESOLVED**

- i. That the content of the presentation be noted.**
- ii. That a site visit of the Longley Lane Waste and Recycling Centre be arranged for Members of the Group.**

### 33. UNITED UTILITIES UPDATE

Chris Matthews, Head of Regional Engagement; Mark Sewell, Wastewater Catchment Manager; and Gemma Parkinson, Area Engagement Lead, United Utilities gave a presentation in respect of River Tame investment activities and micro plastic pollution.

Information on short term (2025-present), medium term (2025-2030) and long term (2025-2050) investment planning activities were highlighted to Members. United Utilities were investing in the Mossley and Saddleworth water treatment works to improve water quality. Investment would include better detection of phosphorus, BOD and ammonia.

Details of the River Tame Operational Working Group were provided and it was explained that the group was formalised following a previous United Utilities/Tameside update meeting. The group, facilitated through the Mersey Rivers Trust, were developing a partnership action plan to mitigate 'catchment operation' issues including littering/fly-tipping, pollution and habitat improvements. There would also be opportunities for the group to influence longer term planning activities, including United Utilities water quality investment programmes.

In addition, United Utilities would bolster local operational support, including:

- Better Rivers Better North West programme, including appointing an initial four River Rangers;
- £25k initial support to the partnership for habitat improvement works; and
- Staff time for volunteering day, including tree planting and planned river clean up events.

An event held at Jet Amber Fields in Denton on 3 March 2023 saw the planting of 500 trees.

Information in relation to the Natural Course project was presented and it was explained that United Utilities was working in partnership with the GMCA and Environment Agency. As part of the project, investigation work was being undertaken on the impact of micro plastics from both wastewater assets (including wastewater treatment works final effluent and intermittent discharges) and other catchment sources.

Members were informed that whilst early discussions identified the River Tame as a potential source for the investigation, the study required a wider representation of micro plastic impacts on both rural and urban rivers and their connected drainage systems. Consequently, the Roch, Irk and Medlock catchments were taken forward. It was anticipated that learning from these projects would help inform the understanding of sources and impact of micro plastics on the wider environment and help to inform any decision making on potential future regulation on micro plastics.

Progress in relation to the study was provide. Following sampling, analysis was still ongoing and was due to be concluded by the end of April 2023. Early conclusions, deduced from the samples that had been analysed at the half way point of the investigation, indicated that water treatment works involved in the investigation were not a major source of micro plastics. This therefore indicated that they were likely to be coming from other, yet unknown, sources. Members were informed that the final report was due to be published in August 2023.

A discussion ensued in relation to what was being done to deal with the discharge of sewage into the River Tame. In response, United Utilities highlighted that the water industry was having to alter how sewage was dealt with and this involved prioritising improvements to the waste water network. Investment in cleaning up the North West's rivers was the largest made by the company and exceeded the money spent on the clean up of the region's coastline.

Members also sought clarity in relation to the number of discharges into the watercourse since the last meeting of the Group that exceeded limits. It was explained that United Utilities could not provide details in relation to third party discharges as these were a matter for the Environment Agency, but would bring details of 'pollution incidences' to a future meeting of the Group.

**RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

**34. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group was scheduled to take place on 14 June 2023.

**CHAIR**