

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP

14 June 2023

Commenced: 4.35 pm

Terminated: 6.10 pm

Present: Councillors Naylor (Chair), Affleck, Axford and Ferguson

In Attendance:

Emma Varnam	Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Jordanna Rawlinson	Head of Communications
Graham Holland	Planning Policy Team Manager
Kathy Bibby	Senior Planning Policy Officer
Nicky Marshall	Greenspace Development Manager
Ria Evans	Marketing and Communications Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillor B Holland

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Climate Emergency Working held on 15 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. GREATER MANCHESTER GREEN CITY REGION UPDATE

The Chair, Councillor Naylor, gave a verbal update in respect of the April meeting of the Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership. It was announced that:

- Greater Manchester had been awarded £70k from Innovate UK's Net Zero Living programme to help accelerate delivery of the city region's Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs).
- A £1.78m grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 3b programme had been received.
- Currently 92 % of buses awarded retrofit funding had been upgraded. Overall, the Greater Manchester based bus fleet would be circa 92 % compliant once all planned retrofits and replacements had been completed in the next six months.
- Workshops held with districts to disseminate the results of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Needs and Supply assessment.
- £97m in government funding awarded to retrofit 5,438 social homes with measures including improved insulation, air source heat pumps, solar panels, draught proofing, ventilation and heating controls.

4. 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.

Members were informed that the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan were adopted in 2021.

The slides showed the project status against each task area using a RAG rating system. It was highlighted that whilst a number of areas would be difficult to achieve, it was important that they were aspirations for the Council.

The work being undertaken by the Council in relation to each of the five themes would be communicated to the borough's residents.

RESOLVED

That the content of the update be noted.

5. PLACES FOR EVERYONE UPDATE

The group received a presentation from the Planning Policy Team Manager in relation to the Places for Everyone planning document. The plan was a joint development plan of nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts, excluding Stockport, which would determine the kind of development that took place in each borough.

Members were informed that the plan was a result of a process that began as the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) in 2014, and had been informed by the feedback received from residents, businesses and the development industry to previous consultations on that plan. Consultations had taken place in November 2014, November 2015, 2016 and 2019.

A final version of the plan was published for eight weeks from 9 August 2021 to 3 October 2021 before being submitted to the Secretary of State on 14 February 2022 for independent examination. Formal hearings were then conducted from 1 November 2022 to 29 March 2023. Following this work it was explained that there had been no request for further work to be undertaken, there had been no need to adjourn and all parties had the opportunity to engage with the examination process.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that Key Objective 7 was to ensure that Greater Manchester was a more resilient and carbon neutral region. Policy JP-S2 concerning carbon and energy aimed to deliver carbon neutrality in the city region no later than 2038 by:

- Retrofitting existing buildings;
- Ensuring a positive approach to renewable and low carbon energy schemes;
- Increasing carbon sequestration, woodland management, tree-planting and flood management; and
- Achieving sustainable construction, adequate EV charging, connection to heat networks and priority to PV installation.

Details of the work to ensure that new residential and non-residential buildings were net zero by 2028 were provided to the group.

In relation to new residential developments, developers would be expected to demonstrate how carbon reductions had been made, following the energy hierarchy through Energy Statements, submitted with each planning application. From 2025, any residual carbon could be offset but only as a last resort. Carbon off set funding would be available for carbon reduction projects.

In new non-residential developments, there aim was also to achieve net zero by 2028. Developments would be expected to achieve at least BREEAM excellent standard or equivalent and energy statements would be submitted with each planning application. Each of the nine districts would be able to set their own measures in relation to areas such as the threshold for EV charging installation and energy efficiency targets.

The principles of net zero carbon were highlighted to Members and it was explained that a 'fabric first approach' should be adopted. Developments should seek to minimise energy demand, maximise energy efficiency, utilise renewable and low carbon energy and only offset as compensation for any remaining emissions.

Information pertaining to Heat and Energy Networks, Policy JP-S 3, were outlined. A map of key areas of opportunity across Tameside and Greater Manchester was included in the slide pack. There would be a requirement for major new residential developments to consider whether a connection could be made and an expectation that public buildings and industrial development connected to or established new networks. Tameside's Local Area Energy Plans would help drive delivery.

Next steps for the plan were highlighted, including a post hearing advice note that would be published shortly. Any further modifications to the plan would be subject to further consultation and the respective Cabinet at each local authority would then need to approve the consultation that related only to any modifications. Following this, inspectors would consider the representations made and issue their report.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

6. GREENSPACE UPDATE

The group received a presentation from the Greenspace Development Manager in relation to tree planting and the borough's greenspaces.

Members were informed that the Council had committed to increase tree planting and had done so each year since 2015. In relation to street trees, 102 had been planted in 2020/21, 95 in 2021/22 and 151 in 2022/23. This consistently outnumbered the number of street trees that had been felled. It was explained that only those trees that posed a safety risk were felled. Details of the external funding achieved through the Urban Tree Challenge was outlined and Tameside had been successful in increasing tree funding from £20,790 in 2020/21 to £26,766 in 2022/23.

In relation to trees on greenspace sites, young trees known as 'whips' had been planted through funding from City of Trees. Since 2020/21, 35,326 whips had been planted across Tameside with the assistance of greenspace volunteers. The Council would continue to work with City of Trees to identify new planting locations in parks and countryside sites.

The aim was to also plant approximately 100 new street trees each year. Working with partners such as Onward Homes and Jigsaw Homes, the Council was keen to ensure that tree planting took place across the borough, not just on Council owned land. Greenspace would continue to apply for suitable funding to enable the Council to continue to increase its tree stock and expand the overall tree canopy by approximately 17% across the borough.

Details of the threat of Ash Dieback to trees was highlighted to Members. The Greenspace Manager explained that the disease was the most significant to affect trees in the UK since Dutch Elm Disease, with the potential to infect more than two billion UK Ash trees and lead to a death of a significant proportion of them.

It was advised that Ash Dieback was already present in Tameside and in line with national estimates it was expected to spread rapidly with between 75% and 90% of the borough's Ash trees becoming infected. Many would then die within 10 years. Currently there was no cure for the disease but it was important that the public were protected from falling limbs and branches from mature Ash trees. The Council was aiming to strike a balance between maintaining public health and safety whilst aiming to minimise the impacts on biodiversity and the environment.

The Council was producing an Ash Dieback plan in line with advice from the Tree Council. Such a plan would set out how the Council would deal with Ash Dieback including an assessment of its impact, the inspection of Council tree stock and the likely costs of dealing with Ash Dieback. Members queried the signs of the disease and it was advised that spotting on the leaves was an initial symptom followed by the infected tree losing its leaves.

A summary of the work carried out each month by the Greenspace Team was provided to the group. All of the work carried out aimed to help protect the environment and meet the aims of the Carbon Reduction and Environment Strategy.

The Greenspace Manager highlighted the valuable work of the Greenspace volunteers. In 2022, volunteers gave over 2000 days and all were trained, managed and supported by the Greenspace Officers. Anybody interested in becoming a volunteer was encouraged to email greenspace@tameside.gov.uk or call Hannah Hernon on 07923 438594.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

7. INFLUENCING OTHERS / CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

The group received a presentation from the Head of Communications outlining the Council's approach to engaging and influencing residents in relation to the environment and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

In February 2020, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to reduce the borough's carbon impact to 'net zero' by 2038. It was highlighted that in order to achieve this ambitious target, there would need to be collective responsibility and enthusiasm from across the borough. A resident's survey showed that 78% of respondents were concerned about climate change and 88% believed it was important for individuals to undertake activities to tackle climate change.

The Council's Communication's Team was developing a coordinated approach to environmental matters within Tameside. This included a communications strategy, umbrella brand, 12-month calendar and one stop shop webpage.

It was explained that the overall aim of the communications strategy was to highlight the climate emergency and influence positive behaviour choices that would collectively support Tameside to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2038. The strategy would link to Council's Climate Change and Environmental Strategy and would be aimed at residents, TMBC staff, school/college pupils and staff, local businesses and organisations as well as those who influenced others, including Members and community leaders.

The communications strategy would embrace a multi-channel approach with a mix of print, digital and potentially broadcast communication to reach the target audience. Further details of the strategy were highlighted:

- Easy to understand language, targeted to the audience.
- Throughout the year, ad-hoc opportunities would be communicated. For example, grants and funding, suitable campaigns or chances to showcase good news stories via social media or press release.
- Continuing to work with partners and supporting external campaigns that were relevant;
- Using data and understanding barriers;
- Green ambassadors and a Think Green pledge; and
- A twelve-month planner, with a monthly focus on a particular issue e.g. September, Reduce Food Waste Month.

Communication's Officers had worked with residents to develop a brand for the strategy. The slogan 'Think Green' had been selected and a number of branding styles were taken to survey. A total of 292 responses were received to the survey that was shared with a wide selection of groups across the borough. Members were advised that the strapline 'Think Green Tameside' had appealed because it was understandable and sent a clear message. The initial accompanying slogan, 'Think Green, Save Money' was not deemed to be necessary by a majority of respondents. Instead, it was considered that a particular slogan could be used for a particular theme.

A discussion ensued regarding countering fatalism and individualism, and the potential for a belief among residents that the issue of climate change was too big for any one individual to tackle. Members believed that it was important to highlight success through communications, and demonstrate that change could be incremental and progressive.

Members particularly welcomed the inclusion and engagement of young people in developing the branding and strategy.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

8. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

9. 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 6 September 2023.

CHAIR