

CARBON AND WASTE REDUCTION PANEL

8 July 2020

Commenced: 4.30 pm

Terminated: 5.45 pm

Present: Councillors Boyle (Chair), Affleck, Cooper, Jones, Lane, Mills, Patrick and Pearce

In Attendance:

Ian Saxon	Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Paul Smith	Assistant Director, Strategic Property
Alison Lloyd-Walsh	Head of Environmental Development
Christina Morton	Environmental Development Officer
Garry Parker	Head of Waste Management

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 Carbon and Waste Reduction Panel held on 11 March 2020 were approved as a correct record.

3. COVID-19 AND THE 5 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Development outlining the Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan and the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the Plan. The Plan, launched in 2019, set out five key challenges that needed to be tackled in order to realise the vision of a clean, green and carbon-neutral city region, with a thriving natural environment and zero-waste economy.

Members were informed that the five principle environmental challenges and threats to Greater Manchester were climate change mitigation; climate change resilience and adaptation; air quality; the production and consumption of resources; and the natural environment. In order to meet the challenges and threats faced, Greater Manchester became the first city region in the UK to set a target to be carbon neutral by 2038.

A number of practical measures were outlined that would enable this ambitious target to be met and it was explained that some of the priority actions included in the Plan were inter-connected and could be delivered together. This was particularly true of schemes related to buildings and transport.

A governance structure had been established to oversee this work, including the creation of a new Green City Region Partnership Board. The Board would bring together the relevant portfolio holders from each of the 10 Greater Manchester councils. Challenge Groups had also been established to identify priority tasks and assign people to working groups in order to ascertain how the green agenda could be driven forward. Each challenge group had divided itself into task and finish groups focusing on priority actions, for example, energy innovation.

The Head of Environmental Development explained that the COVID-19 epidemic and Government-enforced lockdown had a profound effect upon transport and energy usage across Greater

Manchester. It was highlighted that during the earlier stages of lockdown in April road traffic across the city region declined by 62 per cent. Similar dramatic falls were also recorded across the public transport network with bus usage declining 45 per cent and rail usage down by approximately 50 per cent. Energy usage also decreased overall with electricity supplied by Electricity North West falling by 18 per cent and gas consumption down 16 per cent compared to pre-lockdown levels.

It was hoped that some of the positive changes in individual and collective behaviour undertaken during the health crisis could be continued as the country moved towards a 'new normal'. Members were informed that the lockdown had led to a significant increase in the number of people cycling and walking across Greater Manchester as well as individuals making greater use of green spaces. Some of the positive changes that it was hoped could be maintained included:

- Reduced private care use to improve air quality;
- Greater use and support of local businesses;
- Greater levels of walking and cycling activity;
- Increased flexible/home working; and
- Greater appreciation of green spaces.

Realising the goals of the Plan would also be supported through the implementation of policy intervention such as clean energy infrastructure investment; clean research and development spending; and investment in education and training. The Head of Environmental Development explained that such measures could be delivered in a relatively short time frame and would have both a high positive climate impact and long term economic multipliers.

A discussion ensued regarding the support available to change behaviour on the scale that was required. It was envisaged that the community would be engaged through volunteering schemes and working with young people in schools. The Environmental Development Officer advised that the iChooser solar scheme was likely to be repeated in the hope of increasing the uptake among members of the public. Members were keen that the pop-up cycle lanes introduced during the lockdown to promote physical distancing could be retained in some format to encourage a further growth in walking and cycling. Nationally, the Government had announced a multi-billion pound package to help homeowners make their houses greener. Under the scheme most homeowners and landlords could apply for vouchers worth up to £5000, whilst those on low incomes could receive up to £10000 for energy saving home improvements.

RESOLVED

- i. That the content of the presentation be noted.**
- ii. That a presentation on cycling and walking in the Borough be presented to Members at the next meeting of the Panel.**

4. ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE RESPONSE TO THE DECLARATION OF TAMESIDE'S CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Development on the steps being taken to support the response to Tameside Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

Members were informed that the Council was keen to back its declaration at Full Council in February with actions and was forming a cross-Council officer group to better support coordination of activity to tackle climate change. A draft Tameside action plan, with set targets, would be formulated. The Officer's group would be responsible for reviewing the plan and the agreed plan would be taken through the Council's formal governance process. Panel Members would take a leading role in the monitoring and reporting processes of the agreed plan. It was intended that carbon literacy training would be provided to officers and, ultimately Members, to engage them in the process.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

5. WASTE UPDATE

The Panel received an update on Waste and Recycling from the Head of Operations and Neighbourhoods. The Panel were informed of the work undertaken by the Service to maintain bin collections during lockdown and the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic upon waste and recycling rates.

Members were informed that since the Government-enacted lockdown was introduced in response to the pandemic, Tameside had been able to main 100 per cent of its scheduled bin collections. It was explained that in order to maintain the service a number of operational changes had been introduced and staff from across the organisation had been brought in to assist. Refuse operatives had been provided with a range of personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks and hand sanitiser and the number of individuals per vehicle had been reduced to ensure safety.

The lockdown enacted on 23 March 2020 had brought about a dramatic change in the shopping habits of individuals and it was explained that this had a profound impact upon the waste being generated as a result. The Head of Operations and Neighbourhoods advised the Panel that the biggest increase was in food and garden waste which had increased by an unprecedented 61 per cent. A surge in panic buying had resulted in large of amounts of food being thrown away and the exceptionally dry weather during lockdown saw a rise in the number of people undertaking garden improvements. It was highlighted that there was a similar significant rise in the recycling of glass, plastic and tin which had risen by 43 per cent. Fewer people at work and more people working from home had led to an increase in the amount of consumption and therefore waste.

Concern was expressed regarding the level of contamination in blue bins intended for cardboard and paper. Whilst the rate of capture had remained broadly similar, contamination rates had risen dramatically during the lockdown. It had been expected that as individuals made more online purchases there would have been an increase in the amount of high quality cardboard but this did not transpire. The Panel were informed that nappies and food waste were frequent contaminants. The blue bins were particularly vulnerable to contamination due to their higher capacity and the ability to disguise waste. Members enquired as to the work being undertaken to reduce contamination and it was explained that the Council had officers working in particularly high-incidence areas as well as initiating targeted campaigns through social media.

The Panel were pleased that, despite some issues around bin contamination, the Borough had achieved its highest monthly recycling rate of 58.7 per cent in April. Members extended their thanks to officers for the incredibly hard work undertaken during the crisis and the measures enacted to allow the Borough's household waste recycling centres to reopen.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

6. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

CHAIR