

COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Greg Jones (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Gurpreet Bhangra, Helen Price, Catherine Del Campo and Maureen Hunt

Also in attendance: Councillor Mandy Brar, Councillor Ewan Larcombe, Councillor Clive Baskerville, Councillor David Hilton and Councillor Karen Davies

Officers: Rebecca Oates, Oran Norris-Browne, David Scott, Ian Brazier-Dubber and James Thorpe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Bowden. Councillor Hunt acted as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: that the minutes of the last meeting on 17 January 2022 were a true and accurate record.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Actions from previous meeting	Updates
Resident scrutiny topic to be looked at in three months (update on parking on footpaths and verges)	Neil Walters, Parking Officer, stated that there had been no change on the bill to ban footway parking nationally. Requests for footway parking restrictions should be raised with Ward Councillors.
To put Community Safety Partnership on the work programme	On work programme
Look into working with Cllr Price on scoping document for food banks	Not needed as Cllr Price is happy to leave food banks with the responsible officer.
Brochure for Tivoli to be distributed to Parish Councils and Town Forum Members	Clerk to follow up
Improvement of communications	Alysse Strachan has been contacted for

	an update
Air quality item to be put on the work programme	Included in climate change report
Tivoli update	Is on work programme
Cllr Stimson to give update to Cllr Price on bio-diversity action plan after meeting with Andrew Durrant	Cllr Price to follow up
Any comments for the draft Annual Scrutiny Report sent to the clerk	Complete
Report back on Norden Farm	Councillor Bhangra working on scoping document for Norden Farm
Clerk to add Serco to work programme	Complete
James Thorpe to update panel at April meeting	Item on Agenda.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES REVIEW

Ian Brazier-Dubber, Managing Director of RBWM Property Company, updated the Panel on the Community Facilities in Holmanleaze. Since the Panel had produced the Scoping Document, two developments had occurred. First, the Council had adopted the Borough Local Plan which resulted in the existing sites being confirmed as sites for community use. Additionally, the Property Company had met with existing tenants of the properties involved to understand the full scope of tenancies and how they operated. The tenants were secure in their tenancies and still had significant time remaining on their leases. As a result, following further review, it was decided that no further action needed to be taken and the sites would remain as they were. Focus would be placed upon sustaining and improving those sites for community usage.

The Chairman thanked Ian Brazier-Dubber for his update.

Councillor Del Campo asked if this had been discussed by Cabinet and whether the buildings were fit for purpose for the duration of the contracts.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that a formal note regarding the withdrawal of the proposals would be made to Cabinet in due course, and work was ongoing to ascertain the quality of the buildings on the site to determine the quality of the buildings. Initial findings had shown that the buildings had a short life of around 10-years, and work was being undertaken to help tenants sustain the use of properties moving forward.

The Chairman asked Ian Brazier-Dubber if he knew when work would be started on the Magnet Leisure Centre.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that planning consent needed to be granted and a formal process to draw down a development agreement would be needed in order to commence work. The hope was that development would commence in late May or early June.

The Chairman asked if Ian Brazier-Dubber was aware of developments on Queen Street.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that he was aware that there was one remaining site which was subject to a compulsory purchase order. The process to transfer the property to the developer would be concluded in June 2022.

Councillor Price asked if local residents would be made aware of the reversal of the proposal as there had been a high level of community interest. Councillor Price also asked if the green space on the land was still under threat.

Ian Brazier-Dubber stated that residents would be communicated with in order to make them aware of the plans. In addition, the green space was no longer under threat as there was no further intention to develop on the space.

The Chairman thanked Ian Brazier-Dubber for his time.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The Panel considered the written report regarding climate change and sustainability strategy.

The Chairman introduced James Thorpe, Service Lead for Sustainability and Climate, who talked through the report which had been presented to the panel.

Three public speakers addressed the Panel, each speaker was given three minutes to speak.

Dave Scarborough, member of the Climate Emergency Coalition (CEC), asked for clarification regarding measurements of carbon reductions and asked the scrutiny panel how it planned to address potential shortcomings in the end of year report.

Councillor Davies thanked James Thorpe for the update. Councillor Davies stated that there was the need for in-house governance of the Council's climate and sustainability work and

asked whether a structure for this governance could be integrated into the forward plan for the panel. Councillor Davies also asked if work had been commenced on an air quality improvement plan.

Thomas Wigley, local resident, stated that he was encouraged by the Borough's declaration that action on climate change was a clear priority. Thomas Wigley asked for clarification on the date that the Borough aimed to achieve the National Air Quality Objective (NAQO) in all air quality management areas (AQMAs). Thomas Wigley also asked whether the Council could provide more prominent 'no-idling' signage within the AQMAs.

James Thorpe stated that air quality sat within the Environmental Protection team rather than the Climate and Sustainability team, and this could be raised with the team.

ACTION: James Thorpe to discuss the above with the Environmental Protection team.

Councillor Price asked whether the cross-party climate change steering group had been meeting bi-monthly as stated in the end of year report.

James Thorpe stated that a paper had gone to Cabinet in September which resulted in the disbandment of the steering group as it had achieved its aim of establishing the Environment and Climate Strategy.

Councillor Price expressed concern about whether the Council would achieve their goals as a great deal of importance had been placed upon the Climate Strategy. Councillor Price also asked how the Council would be measuring its progress and success when some targets had not been given set deadlines.

James Thorpe explained that the End of Year Report contained a number of tables which were directly linked to the strategy itself which contained a number of measurements and targets that the Council and Borough were working towards. Additionally, a great deal of work had gone into the Citizens' Portal which would detail the Council's performance and progress against its goals. James Thorpe explained that all the actions within the strategy had a five-year time frame and a plan of how this would be achieved. James Thorpe noted it had been a difficult year but the Council had made progress, and cited recent successes such as the planting of 8,000 trees and upcoming plans to provide five schools within the Borough with new low-carbon heating systems. Extensive work had been ongoing of 45 Council buildings to understand where carbon emissions were coming from and which technology could be put in place.

The Chairman thanked James Thorpe for his contribution and echoed Councillor Price's comment about the need for quantifiable measures in order to understand how the Council was progressing in its targets.

Councillor Davies asked the panel whether they would be taking this work forward and expressed her support if this were to happen.

The Chairman stated that this would be discussed in the work programme section of the meeting.

Dave Scarbrough had asked how much the Borough had achieved in terms of carbon reduction, and how the Council would know when it had achieved its target of 50% reduction by 2025.

James Thorpe stated that carbon emissions had been reduced by 6.1%. James Thorpe also stated that the method in which the Council collected data meant that 2027 would be the earliest date at which the Council would know whether the 2025 target had been reached.

Councillor Hunt thanked James Thorpe for the report and noted that eight officers were employed covering the Council's Sustainability work and that £3.5m had been awarded for grants. Councillor Hunt went on to note that £250,000 had been allocated to establish the Climate Partnership, with an additional £250,000 for running of the Partnership every year for the next three years. Councillor Hunt asked how the Council would be working with the Climate Partnership given the sum of money allocated to its function.

James Thorpe clarified that it was £250,000 for three years, or £750,000 in total. There would be a Council officer and a Councillor on the Board of the Climate Partnership, which would enable the Council to work with the Partnership alongside being able to open this challenge up to the wider community.

Councillor Bhangra thanked James Thorpe for the report and asked how and where external funding would be spent, and which properties would meet the requirement of the funding.

James Thorpe stated that the report contained details of where the money was allocated. James Thorpe provided additional details of projects such as supporting residential energy efficiency programmes. Buildings which used the most energy were prioritised for funding. Heat mapping was also used to understand heat networks within the Borough.

Councillor Hunt asked which residents would benefit from energy efficiency improvements as stated in the Report.

James Thorpe stated that it would be privately owned properties which would be able to access these improvements. Set criteria would be used to targeted fuel poor properties by taking into account low income and poor energy efficiency to identify those who would benefit from the improvements. James Thorpe stated that there had already been over 70 applications to the scheme.

ACTION: James Thorpe to send Councillor Hunt details of eligibility of energy efficiency improvements.

Councillor Hunt asked whether heat mapping cost the full figure of £70,000 as cited in the report.

James Thorpe stated that £70,000 was the total amount allocated to the heat mapping project, but the project did not cost the full amount. The amount would have been a significant proportion of this figure, and this was an ongoing project with the full report due in the summer.

Councillor Hunt asked about the £20,000 awarded by Defra to support work on biodiversity and what the Council implemented with this sum.

James Thorpe stated that this was to help the Council understand the biodiversity net gain rules and start to deliver the scheme. This fell under the Environment Act and made it a legal requirement for new developments to produce a 10% biodiversity net gain. This was a new introduction, and the Council were looking at how the funding could be best used to implement net gain within the Borough. The Biodiversity Action Plan would be published in late April 2022 and would contain more information.

Councillor Del Campo thanked James Thorpe for his efforts. Councillor Del Campo asked how much of the 15% reduction in Council related reductions could be attributed to people working from home and whether emissions increase as people returned to the office.

James Thorpe stated that many of the Council's buildings stayed open during the pandemic such as schools which formed a large part of the Council's footprint. Electrical reduction was observed as a result of people working from home and an increase in gas production was observed as a result of increased ventilation. James Thorpe stated that he did not believe there would be a significant bounce-back as a result of people returning to the office.

Councillor Del Campo asked for further information on the data around emissions from leisure centres.

ACTION: James Thorpe to report back on emissions from leisure centres.

Councillor Del Campo asked for clarity regarding the delivery date of 31 March 2026. James Thorpe stated that the financial year rather than the calendar year was used when looking at energy data.

Councillor Del Campo commended the Council for achieving the 2025 recycling goal and asked whether waste had been reduced or stayed the same. Councillor Del Campo also asked whether this was a result of people buying more online shopping during lockdown, and if so whether this reduction would be sustainable. If this figure was sustainable, Councillor Del Campo asked whether a new target could be set to increased recycling rates further.

James Thorpe stated that work was ongoing to change the way waste was collected to increase recycling rates, and that he did not have sufficient data to determine if and how recycling habits would change after the pandemic.

Councillor Del Campo stated that the single-use plastic policy was endorsed in December 2019 and was next mentioned with regards to the Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. Councillor Del Campo asked what had been achieved during this interim period in terms of removing single-use plastics from the Council's estates and operations.

James Thorpe stated that an audit of the use of single-use plastics on the Council's estates was on the work plan for later this year. This would be aided by the upcoming recruitment of a new officer to focus on the circular economy.

Councillor Del Campo asked if the Council was on track to increase renewable capacity tenfold by 2025 and to be producing 2500kWh per household by 2030.

James Thorpe stated that the renewable capacity figures would be included in the new Citizens' Portal. The Council would be launching a collective solar scheme in May 2022 which was expected to help with those figures.

Councillor Brar asked how the government grant to fund low-income homes would be distributed to local residents.

James Thorpe stated that work was ongoing with the Communications team to publicise the availability of the grant to low-income households. More information would be forthcoming over the next few weeks as the project was scaled up and information would be included in both the Members and Residents Newsletter.

Councillor Price asked how the scoping document would be taken forward and how she could ask additional questions about the report.

James Thorpe stated that the report had been produced in parallel with the scoping document and would be able to incorporate additional information into any further updates to the Panel. James Thorpe also stated that Councillor Price could email him with any questions.

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Panel approved the draft Annual Scrutiny Report.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted that the work programme would be discussed offline.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....