

## **Decisions of the Environment and Climate Change Committee**

9 June 2022

Members Present:-

Councillor Alan Schneiderman (Chair)

Councillor Geof Cooke (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joshua Conway  
Councillor Laithe Jajeh  
Councillor Rishikesh Chakraborty  
Councillor Giulia Innocenti  
Councillor Paul Lemon

Councillor Simon Radford  
Councillor Emma Whysall  
Councillor Rohit Grover  
Councillor David Longstaff

### **1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting of the new Environment and Climate Change Committee. He noted that further to a Declaration of Climate and Biodiversity Emergency at Annual Council in May 2022, the Committee would move to a new emphasis on climate change and sustainability, which would be added to its Terms of Reference. The Chair welcomed residents to the meeting, noting that the council is keen to improve engagement with residents.

Cllr Jajeh congratulated the Chair on his appointment as Chair of the Committee.

The previous minutes were noted by the Committee.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be agreed as a correct record.**

### **2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS**

None.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND N PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

None.

### **4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)**

None.

### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)**

The Chair noted that public questions had been received. These had been published prior to the meeting, together with responses from officers. The residents were not in attendance.

## 6. MEMBERS' ITEMS

A Member's Item was received from Cllr Simon Radford.

Cllr Radford presented his item on the decline of swifts which he said he is keen to try to reverse. He thanked Mr Scott Millar a Barnet resident who had written to him on this issue.

Cllr Radford added that this is one example of where sustainability and biodiversity can be placed at the heart of a range of council activities as part of its new Biodiversity Strategy. This might include the installation of swift boxes on council buildings, and might request that swift nesting bricks be added as part of planning proposals for new developments.

A Member noted that the Biodiversity Officer could advise on actions rather than the Committee being too prescriptive. He added that climate change impacts across the committees and he did not think that E&CCC would have powers to instruct planning officers.

Ms Cath Shaw, Deputy Chief Executive noted that Constitution and General Purposes Committee would review the Committee's Terms of Reference so further discussions would take place there. She added that there are 71 references to biodiversity in the current draft of the Local Plan, and swifts are cited as an example of a species requiring habitat enhancement as they are considered to be under threat.

A Member asked whether other local authorities had picked up this specific issue. The Chair responded that the decline in swifts is a matter of concern to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Ms Wakeling, Executive Director, Adults and Health responded that she would arrange for further investigations into other authorities and would circulate this after the meeting.

**Action: Executive Director, Adults and Health**

The Chair moved to a vote to approve the recommendation that officers consider action to reverse the decline of swifts as part of its Biodiversity Strategy.

For (approval) - 11

**RESOLVED that the above recommendation was approved.**

## 7. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY UPDATE

Mr Stephen McDonald, Director of Growth, introduced the report, which recommended that the Committee instructs officers to draw up proposals for a Citizens' Assembly to inform the development of a Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan. The report also recommends that the Committee approves the appointment of Cllr Schneiderman as Lead Member for Climate Change and the Director of Growth as Lead Officer for Climate Change.

Mr McDonald reported that a draft strategy would be brought to the Committee later in the year for approval. A report would be presented to the next meeting of Constitution and General Purposes Committee on the Committee's name change and the Lead Member and Lead Officer.

A Member asked how much the Citizens' Assembly and Action Plan would cost. The Chair responded that the details are to be worked out and this would be presented at the next meeting of the E&CC Committee in September. He noted that £50k had been included for this in the Alternative Budget. The cost would depend on how the work is organised and full details were not yet decided. The budgetary part could be assigned to the project when the road map is in place.

A Member asked how the success of the project could be benchmarked to measure its success and value for money. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that a review would be carried out. The Director of Growth offered to share with the Committee studies carried out on sustainability for London and more detail on local and national targets.

**Action: Director of Growth**

A Member said that he supported a Sustainability Strategy but was not in a position to approve the recommendations without details on the future cost.

The Deputy Chief Executive noted that Policy & Resources Committee had previously delegated authority to the Section 105 Officer to turn the interim sustainability post into a permanent one and a paper had been presented to Policy & Resources Committee the previous day.

A Member moved a motion to amend Recommendation 2 of the report. He proposed that a report is brought to the Committee for consideration prior to authority being delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the E&CC Committee to establish the Assembly. This was seconded by Cllr Jajeh.

The Chair moved to a vote on the motion:

For the amended recommendation – 4

Against the amended recommendation – 7

The motion was lost.

The Chair moved to a vote on the six recommendations in the officer's report.

For – 7

Against – 0

Abstained – 4

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **8. TACKLING FLY TIPPING AND LITTERING**

Mr Declan Khan, Assistant Director of Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Protection reported that a review of environmental enforcement and fines had been carried out, including reductions for early payment of fines.

The previous contract with Kingdom had ended in February 2022. Environmental enforcement, including flytipping, littering and trade waste sits within the remit of the Community Safety Team (CST) since this contract ended.

Mr Khan reported that the new charging system means that a reduction of 30% of the penalty is offered for payments made within 14 days. This takes into account pressures on the cost of living. This tool should help to reduce the caseloads for court action due to non payment which caused further delays.

A Member welcomed the changes which had been implemented over several months with cross-party support. He noted that the CST is more visible in the community and had placed a greater emphasis on combatting serious incidents of flytipping and littering. He asked when the community skips would be introduced as these should help to improve the handling of waste.

The Chair stated that details would be brought to the meeting of E&CC Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> September and he hoped that the community skips would be implemented following this.

A Member enquired about the legality of the reduced payment of £35 if payment is made more quickly (page 37 of the agenda pack).

Mr Khan responded that the reduction is discretionary and this had been cleared with the legal team.

The Chair moved to a vote on the five recommendations in the report:

For – 11

Against – 0

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **9. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES UPDATE**

Ms Cassie Bridger, Assistant Director, Greenspaces and Leisure introduced the report, highlighting items progressed under the existing Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2016-2026.

Ms Bridger reported that several changes had been made since the inception of the Strategy further to new legislation, other local and national policies being updated and the experience of the pandemic.

Ms Bridger explained that the report indicates the suspension of the park quality / value assessmentss. All parks are valued by communities and a new policy will consider available methods for future assessments. The new policy will be brought to the Committee in the future for consideration.

A Member enquired about the categories within the quality/ value assessments. Ms Bridger responded that there are no statutory standards, although the Green Flag Award has specific criteria. The categories help to inform the council on where to provide resources.

A Member enquired whether there is a policy around large gatherings in parks. Ms Wakeling, Executive Director, Adults and Health, noted that there is an Events in Parks Policy which had been agreed by Full Council. Improving communication with Ward Members on upcoming events was agreed.

The Chair moved to a vote on the three recommendations in the report:

For (approval) – 11  
Against (approval) - 0

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **10. AIR QUALITY UPDATE**

Mr Stephen McDonald, Director of Growth presented the report.

Mr McDonald noted that National Clean Air Day would take place on 16<sup>th</sup> June; he would circulate some information to Members on Barnet's participation in this.

A Member asked what the administration's response on Recommendation 4 in relation to the expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) would be. The Chair noted that the response would be to recognise the improvement in air quality as a result of the existing zone, however further expansion would need the introduction of an extensive scrappage scheme to support residents on low incomes who may need to change their vehicles as a result.

Mr McDonald noted that there would be a social media campaign around the expansion programme.

A Member asked whether hedging, trees and rewilding had been considered, particularly around schools and in built up areas, to protect air quality. Mr McDonald responded that this can be included and that the report does not contain a definitive list of interventions.

A Member asked that car clubs be encouraged in the Borough. Mr McDonald noted that this is part of the Transport Strategy and officers would take this on board.

**Action: Mr McDonald**

The Chair moved to a vote on the Recommendations in the officer's report:

For (approval) – 11  
Against (approval) – 0

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **11. PROPOSED MONETARY PENALTIES RELATING TO LETTING AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AGENTS**

Mr James Armitage, Director, Regulatory Services introduced the report which recommended approval to impose monetary penalties, to a maximum of £5000, on letting agents who fail to display their fees and other relevant information, and for property management and letting agents who fail to join a redress scheme.

Mr Armitage noted that without this provision the council is faced with cumbersome and costly prosecutions. The plan is for the income from the penalties to be put back into frontline services. In addition it is hoped that the penalties will result in increased compliance across Barnet.

The Chair moved to a vote on the Officer's two recommendations in the report:

For (approval) – 11  
Against (approval) – 0

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **12. REVIEW OF WARD MEMBER PARKING PERMIT ARRANGEMENTS**

Mr Phil Hoare, Assistant Director, Parking introduced the report which requested approval to cease entitlement to a free borough-wide parking permit for elected Barnet Ward Members, GLA Members and Members of Parliament.

Mr Hoare outlined details of the new paid-for permit and parameters for its issue following a review of the existing model as requested by the new administration. The new Ward Councillor Parking Permit (WCPP) would allow Ward Councillors to park in resident permit holders' parking places within the ward they represent whilst undertaking council business only, and the permit would be paid for by the Member under the emissions-based charging system applicable to residents. Currently Members' permits allow them to park in almost any parking bay apart from disabled bays and loading spaces.

A Member enquired what problem this change would address. The Chair responded that it is unfair that Members can park free of charge anywhere in the Borough, whilst residents and businesses have to pay.

A Member noted that this could introduce a conflict of interest for Members when voting on the implementation of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ). He enquired whether this would constitute a pecuniary interest. The Governance Officer responded that this was unlikely given the amount involved but she would check with the Monitoring Officer and respond to the Member after the meeting.

**Action: Governance Officer**

A Member asked whether it is fair to local residents given that Ward Members represent them and also some Members are less mobile. The Chair responded that many Members carry out their duties without the use of a car.

The Chair moved to a vote on the five recommendations outlined in the report:

For (approval) – 7  
Against (approval) – 0  
Abstained – 4

**RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.**

## **13. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the Forward Plan.

Cllr Grover requested that he have sight of the new Highway Street Design Manual that would be brought to the Committee in November 2022. Mr Edser, Director, Highways and

Transportation responded that he would arrange this and that a briefing note could be provided prior to the meeting if requested.

**RESOLVED that the Forward Plan was approved.**

**14. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 8.52 pm