

Nottingham City Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 8 March 2023 from 2.05 pm - 3.51 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Samuel Gardiner (Chair)
Councillor Georgia Power (Vice Chair)
Councillor Carole McCulloch (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Angharad Roberts
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Merlita Bryan
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Corall Jenkins
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Sajid Mohammed

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Wayne Bexton	- Director of Carbon Reduction, Energy and Sustainability
James Lavender	- Governance Officer
Angie Lillistone	- Head of Carbon Reduction Projects, Policy and Communities
Councillor Sally Longford	- Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

65 Apologies for absence

Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora – Other council business
Councillor Gul Khan – Unwell
Councillor Sajid Mohammed – Leave

66 Declarations of interests

None.

67 Minutes

The Committee commended the work that council officers had delivered on behalf of the Committee over the municipal term.

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 October 2022 and 8 February 2023 were confirmed as true records and signed by the Chair.

68 Nottingham's Carbon Neutral Policy

Councillor Sally Longford, Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services, supported by Wayne Bexton, Director of Carbon Reduction, Energy and Sustainability, and Angie Lillistone, Head of Carbon Reduction Projects, Policy and Communities, delivered a presentation detailing the Council's performance against its

own Carbon Neutral Action Plan to enable Nottingham to be the first UK city to be carbon neutral by 2028, and highlighted the following information:

- (a) the goal of Nottingham being the first UK city to be carbon neutral by 2028 was approved by Full Council in January 2019. The Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2020 placed greater emphasis on achieving the plan;
- (b) Nottingham is listed in the Top 122 of world cities for taking positive action on climate change;
- (c) 1,700 city residents downloaded the Green Rewards App, which was designed to encourage people to reduce their carbon footprint. As a result, there has been a 70 ton reduction in carbon emissions in Nottingham;
- (d) 24,000 trees have been planted to date to help absorb carbon dioxide;
- (e) some of the Council's vehicle fleet has been upgraded with Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs);
- (f) 30% of Nottingham City Transport's (NCT) buses are operating on biogas or electricity;
- (g) the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University are in the Top 5 most sustainable universities in the world;
- (h) Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust launched their NHS Green Plan in April 2022, with an aim of achieving net zero by 2040;
- (i) there has been a 49.9% reduction in city wide emissions and a 57.7% reduction in per capita emissions, but more needs to be done to achieve the target of net zero by 2028;
- (j) the Council only produces 3% of the city's total greenhouse gas emissions, so it's important for the community and businesses to be involved to help achieve the target. To help with this, the Nottingham Green Partnerships has been established and 30 organisations are involved with the Partnership so far;
- (k) 45 organisations have signed up to the "We Support CN28" objective;
- (l) Council officers work closely with local businesses and organisations by delivering seminars to encourage ideas for reducing carbon emissions;
- (m) social media, newsletters, apps and reports are all utilised to raise awareness and encourage involvement amongst the people of Nottingham;
- (n) a Nottingham Climate Assembly is in development to engage the community on climate change action.

In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- (o) the Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services for her work on the Carbon Neutrality Plan;
- (p) the Council should do more to promote the achievement of Nottingham's position in the Top 122 cities in the world for taking action to reduce the impact of climate change;
- (q) engagement with schools in Nottingham on CN28 is carried out through workshops, rather than a long-term basis. Schools are not currently part of the Green Partnership. Some energy efficiency works have been carried out on schools through grants being awarded to fund LED lighting and insulation in school buildings across the city;
- (r) a Supplementary Planning Document is being drafted for implementation early next year which will enable scrutiny of planning development applications, and a Carbon Neutral Design Panel will be able to make recommendations to developers to create more eco-friendly developments;
- (s) further encouragement of public transport, walking and cycling network use is needed;
- (t) the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in Nottingham was imported consumption, for example, people travelling abroad or importing goods from other countries;
- (u) whilst action is being undertaken to make housing in Nottingham more energy efficient, such as installing solar panels, improving insulation and replacing gas boilers, there was a lack of a consistent funding stream to deliver carbon reduction in homes and businesses;
- (v) there are positive case studies from residents saying that they have benefitted from their homes being upgraded to be more energy efficient;
- (w) retrofitting of housing stock has taken place in Radford, with some properties now being run entirely on electricity;
- (x) officers have worked with other council departments to explain the benefits of reducing their carbon footprint, such as the amount of money and resources saved;
- (y) other public sector bodies such as Nottinghamshire Police, the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and the East Midlands Ambulance Service have signed up to "We Support CN28";
- (z) there is a Tree Strategy in place for the city that was adopted before CN28 was established to preserve the tree cover within the city. Before the strategy, it was felt that unnecessary tree felling had been taking place, but the Strategy does not prevent tree felling/pruning where it is needed;

- (aa) the School Streets scheme aims to improve air quality round schools by closing certain roads around schools to through traffic and providing alternative routes and parking areas;
- (bb) the Work Place Parking Levy aims to encourage alternative methods of transport to work including, walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The levy also supports investment in transport options in the city;
- (cc) Severe Weather Impact Monitoring (SWIM) is used to analyse the impact of severe weather on Nottingham and the likely impact on costs to the council;
- (dd) the Eastcroft Incinerator burns household and business waste and uses the heat generated to warm 5,000 homes and some businesses. The current contract is in place until 2030, and there will be a five-year period in advance of the contract end date to renegotiate terms. The heating provided by the Eastcroft Incinerator has been proven to be very energy efficient over a five-year period;
- (ee) there is a two year lag on data about the reduction of carbon emissions, so the data for 2028 will not be available until 2030;
- (ff) further promotion of the Green Rewards app is needed by sharing in community groups, the Leader and Deputy Leader newsletters, and through Nottingham City Homes (NCH);
- (gg) there is difficulty accessing different parts of the city via public transport as there are few buses which go directly from east to west. There are still pressures on the bus services, with customer numbers not returning to pre-pandemic levels. Any issues with public transport could be raised through the Council's Transport Team;
- (hh) good examples to use for people that are sceptical about climate change are the extreme changes in the weather in recent times compared with the past, such as the rain storms in 2020 which saw such a large amount of rainfall that it overwhelmed the drainage network in parts of Nottingham, resulting in standing water backing up out of drainage holes in the road;
- (ii) little things can be done at home, such as turning the heating down and reducing water consumption to help achieve the goal of Nottingham being carbon neutral by 2028.

Resolved to:

1) Request that:

- (a) further work is done to promote the achievements of the CN28 strategy to date, such as Nottingham being in top 122 cities in the world;**
- (b) further promotion of the Green Rewards App takes place;**
- (c) the Committee is provided with data on engagement from subscribers of the newsletter;**

- (d) work is done to increase engagement with schools on the CN28 strategy;**
- (e) flexibility to respond to local needs is built in to the delivery of schemes in local areas;**
- (f) work is done to establish how residents can be supported with making changes at home, such as charging infrastructure for electric vehicles;**

2) Record the Committee's support for the introduction of the Supplementary Planning Document.

69 Scrutiny Action Plan Update

The Chair introduced the report updating the Committee on the progress against the Scrutiny Action Plan, which was created following the review carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) in 2021, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the Council's culture towards scrutiny had improved, with more directorates suggesting items to be considered;
- (b) the Leader of the Council reported to the Chair that he had been scrutinised more over the past year than in previous years;
- (c) the profile of scrutiny within the Council had risen;
- (d) a recommendation tracker has been introduced, which has seen an increase in responses to recommendations being received.

The Chair thanked the Committee members for their effective scrutiny during committee meetings.

In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- (e) the Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB) are regularly updated on the Council's governance arrangements and are satisfied with the current progress being made with the scrutiny function;
- (f) the recommendation tracker means that the Committee is able to track the progress of its recommendations throughout the year;
- (g) the Chair has regular meetings with Leadership Group, which involves the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Executive and Corporate Directors, regarding scrutiny matters and Corporate Leadership Team also receive a copy of the work programmes on a monthly basis;
- (h) whilst the Action Plan stated an objective that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny would attend Executive Panel on a regular basis, it is felt that this needs to be discussed further as it could be duplicating work due to the arrangements outlined in (g) above;

- (i) the Council Plan monitoring report has been delayed to enable critical indicators to be fully developed and for improvements in reporting systems to be made.

70 Future Scrutiny Arrangements

The Chair introduced the report detailing suggested points for discussion on future scrutiny arrangements for the 2023/24 municipal year onwards to enable the scrutiny function to continue its improvement journey and make council scrutiny more effective, and highlighted that consideration should be given to the following areas:

- the number of scrutiny committees needed and the remits they should have;
- the frequency of meetings;
- membership numbers for the Committees and whether representation of political parties should be broadened;
- member capacity to sit on a potential increased number of Committees;
- whether the summer period should be used to hold Informal training/development/briefing sessions for scrutiny councillors.

In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- (a) aligning scrutiny Committees to the Directorates would be appropriate, with the retention of the two existing scrutiny committees for Peoples. Aligning committees with portfolio remits was not felt to be appropriate given the number of them and the potential for remits to change each municipal year;
- (b) there needs to be potential for scrutiny committees to hold joint meetings where a topic crosses the remit of two or three directorates;
- (c) the number of members on Committees could be reduced in to enable members to have capacity to sit on a larger number of committees, but any increase in political representation would need to ensure that the Committee were still politically balanced;
- (d) further research is needed into what scrutiny arrangements other UK core-cities possessed and modelling into how these arrangements would work at Nottingham City Council;
- (e) an overarching scrutiny committee does have advantages so should be considered;
- (f) all meetings taking place during the day does cause issues for members that work, so evening meetings should be considered as an option;
- (g) the summer period could be used for training and development unless an urgent issue needs to be considered;
- (h) any constitutional amendments would need to be made by Full Council;
- (i) the Independent Remuneration Panel would need to meet to consider the allowances if the structure changes;

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- (j) as the changes to the structure are significant, they would need to be discussed over the summer period to consult with new Councillors, with a new structure not being introduced until May 2024;
- (k) more resources are needed in Governance Services to ensure that the scrutiny function is adequately supported.

71 Recommendation Tracker

The updated recommendation tracker and responses were noted.

72 Work Programme 2023-24 Development

The Chair updated the Committee on possible topics for scrutiny in the Committee's Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year:

- Consultation requirements and process;
- Crime and Drugs Partnership;
- Quarterly report on the Council Plan;
- IAB Updates;
- Updates from the Leader on progress against the Together for Nottingham Plan.

In addition, the Committee requested that housing repairs and budget consultation be included on the work programme.