

PRESENT

Committee Members

Cllr Tom Bennett (Chair)
Cllr Hamish Adourian
Cllr Laura Burns
Cllr Aarien Areti
Cllr Abdullahi Nur

Others Present

Cllr Cem Kemahli, Lead Member for Planning & Public Realm
Cllr Will Pascall
Cllr Johnny Thalassites, Lead Member for Finance, Customer Services & Net Zero
Council
Cllr Mary Weale

Council Officers

Emily Beard, Governance Officer
James Diamond, Scrutiny & Policy Officer
Andrew Burton, Director of Transport and Regulatory Services
James Caspell, Neighbourhood Director
Sue Harris, Executive Director for Environment and Communities
Jacqui Hird, Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
James Latham, Principal Flood and Water Management Officer
Terry Oliver, Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllrs. Mona Adam and Roberto Weeden-Sanz.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 4 – Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Draft Strategy Briefing – as his business worked in flood prediction and prevention and, a non-pecuniary interest on Item 5 – Net Zero 2030 – Response to Recommendations of Select Committee’s Report – as he was a member of North Kensington Community Energy.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

4 LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - DRAFT STRATEGY BRIEFING

At the Chair's invitation, the Lead Member for Planning & Public Realm, Cllr. Cem Kemahli, supported by James Latham, Principal Flood and Water Management Officer, introduced the report and raised the following points:

1. The Council's work on flood risk management was only one part of a wider piece of work with partners, and the Council relied on them for funding in this area.
2. There were challenges due to archaic infrastructure in a changing climate, and mitigation could only go so far. There was a good programme of improving drainage.
3. The civil engineering requirement was vast, and it went beyond the capacity of a local authority. A London-wide and national push was needed in this area.
4. The Strategy was a statutory document. The last version was produced in 2015 and a lot had happened since then. It was the culmination of a number of reviews and investigations, including the Committee's Working Group, and set the future direction.
5. It focussed on local flood risk within the realms of the Council's responsibilities, but it provided links to other organisations.
6. The Strategy covered four main areas: flood resilient communities, adaptive places, working together, and monitoring and review. It was also accompanied by an action plan.

The Chair then invited the Committee to ask questions and the discussion included the following:

1. Asked for an update on the pan-London group on flooding which had been established. The Lead Member explained that he sat on the group as the lead councillor for communications. There was now a Chair for the group and the next meeting was taking place in the next couple of weeks. There needed to be a pan-London way of articulating the issues and some key themes that all Councils could use in their communication. The officer added that he sat on the officer group and the evidence working group. An engineering consultancy firm had been appointed to develop a pan-London strategy, to sit alongside local strategies to deal with the issues that could not be dealt with at an individual local authority basis.
2. Sought an update on insurance for houses at risk of flooding and encouraged the Council to support the MP for Kensington, Felicity Buchan, on this issue. The officer confirmed that the letter received from the Flooding Minister had

been circulated to the Committee. It was a difficult picture in terms of what could be done. Most of the issues surrounded around the eligibility criteria for certain properties to access FloodRe cover. The Council would continue to put forward the case to review the eligibility criteria, as it disproportionately affected properties within the borough. This was included in the action plan that accompanied the Strategy.

3. Queried whether there was anything the Council could do about the increase of the premium. In response, the officer confirmed that it was very difficult. There were increases within the insurance market more widely, irrespective of other factors such as flood risk. The Committee requested a detailed update on this in a year.

Action by: *Principal Flood and Water Management Officer*

4. Enquired as to whether leaflets on sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) had been produced. The officer explained that there was increased information available on the website, with more information on flood protective measures residents could do to their properties and some information on SuDS. There were actions related to physical materials, especially for those who were digitally excluded. The majority of material of local libraries had not been produced yet.
5. Questioned how funding was distributed throughout the borough for schemes related to slowing the flow of rainwater and noted that there had been no progress in Dalgarno ward. The Lead Member explained that there was a timeline for the schemes, and some had already been implemented, for example, St Helen's started before 2021. Projects which included SuDS were part of the plans, although SuDS were only a small part of land surface area. The officer added that there was an action related to Little Wormwood Scrubs, as well as in housing estates in Dalgarno. The order of projects was not listed in the Strategy.
6. Asked about communication used to residents to make them aware of funding they could utilise. The Lead Member responded there could be some emphasis on what the Council was providing beyond the standard opportunities. The officer added that some funding became available on an annual basis and those could be shared.
7. Queried how the community resilience workshops with local organisations were advertised. The officer shared that the workshops were hosted by the resilience team in the Council, and it focused on wider community resilience, of which flood risk management was one. Conversations were ongoing about including flooding more often in workshops going forward.
8. Noted that a lot of the actions relied on the resource of the Principal Flood and Water Management Officer and questioned whether this was sufficient, and asked about the estimated costings of actions. The Lead Member responded that it was difficult to put together a holistic cost. For example, SuDS ended up full of litter and there was a cost to maintain everything. A lot of the work was about incremental improvements; however, they had started costing revenue costs of individual schemes. The officer explained that many of the actions

were not capital projects. There were many officers in the Council from a range of services doing work which contributed to the management of the risk of flooding, but he was responsible for the coordination of that work. The Committee suggested that some system of prioritisation of the actions should be included in the final version of the Strategy.

9. Enquired how funding was released for SUDs on Council housing estates. The Lead Member explained that it was linked to highways works. The Council had committed to complete one scheme in every ward, as and when good ideas were suggested by those living on the estate. Additionally, each housing estate had access to a housing improvements fund. There were other funds with separate routes to the Council. It helped when residents and residents' associations came forward with suggestions.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member and officer and summarised the discussion.

Actions to be completed, with any information requested by the Committee to be sent to the Governance Officer for circulation:

1. For the Principal Flood and Water Management Officer to provide a detailed update on the insurance arrangements for properties at high flood risk.
2. For the Lead Member to provide a written update on the communications plan of the pan-London group on flood risk management, especially regarding funding opportunities.
3. For the Principal Flood and Water Management Officer to include prioritisation of actions in the final version of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

5 NET ZERO 2030 - RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT

At the Chair's invitation, the Lead Member for Finance, Customer Service & Net Zero Council introduced the report:

1. It was noted that it was both a priority and challenge for the Council.
2. It was becoming more difficult to invest in net zero but that should not dim the ambition.
3. The report set out where the Council was making progress, such as, in schools and operational buildings.

The Chair then invited questions from the Committee and Cllr. Will Pascall, Chair of the Environment Select Committee when the Committee report was written, and the following points were raised:

1. Asked when phase one schools would be completed and whether this would align with the academic year. The Lead Member shared that they visited a school recently and the work was progressing well. The works should be finished by March/April 2024. Officers added that works were underway for

every school in phase one except Colville Primary School, as it was a listed building and required planning permission. The Council worked closely with schools to limit disruption; work took place from 4.00pm to 10.00pm. Feedback had been positive, as contractors had left the schools spotless. Radiators had been replaced and heat pumps had been installed.

2. Sought further information on the retrofit programme for schools. The Lead Member noted that 9 per cent of the Council's carbon emissions were from Council-owned schools. There were six schools in phase one and eight schools in phase two. The Council had just applied for Government funding for phase two. Following this, there would be six schools remaining which should be funded by a capital bid. Schools had been prioritised on the basis of age and highest emissions.
3. Enquired about the total number of units (out of the 9,000) that had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of B or C, and the total million tonnes of carbon per year from social housing energy use. The officers would provide a full breakdown following the meeting. It was currently predicted based on different sources of EPC data and included a swing of around nine points. The median in the borough was a rating of D. EPC was related to cost rather than emissions. They were setting metrics to measure before and after the passive house building package which intended to reduce heat demand and bills.

Action by: Neighbourhood Director

4. Noted that the pace of obtaining grants was positive but the implementation had not been as successful. It was clear that recommendation four in the Committee report had not been fully understood by officers and now that it had been, the Committee asked that the practicalities of it were considered. The officers confirmed that they had full understanding of the recommendation now. Thus far, the focus had been on reducing emissions. £100 million was the high level, indicative costing but this was likely to go up significantly and therefore, the rate of progress could not be judged against the £100 million target.
5. In reference to recommendation two in the Committee report, it was noted that they were not against heat pumps, however, residents were only as warm as the buildings they lived in, as many were unable to afford heating. Therefore, it was crucial not to slow down on materials and insulating buildings. It was good to install heat pumps where appropriate and in circumstances where they could be maintained effectively.
6. Queried how long it would take to implement the remaining refit of street lighting and how easy it was to replace. The Lead Member explained that it was dependent on funding, as it was in competition with other greening priorities. The green fund was only £1 million a year and a single retrofit project would absorb the funding for a year. The officer added that the capital programme for street lighting was increasing.
7. Questioned how long it took waste collection vehicles to stop working from wear and tear. The officers shared that it was dependent on the vehicle.

Currently, waste collection was mostly diesel, but there were plans to transition to an electric fleet in the next two years. There were currently issues with the location of the depot and installing chargers. A normal diesel vehicle lasted about eight years, if not more, and they were used daily. The Committee requested an update on this when ready. The officer confirmed that the plan was for 18 vehicles to be replaced and then to start to phase out the diesel vehicles from then onwards.

Action by: *Director of Cleaner, Greener, and Cultural Services*

8. Asked whether things which removed carbon were considered in the calculation of net zero. The officers confirmed that currently they only included things which emitted carbon, however, for housing, they did look at carbon sinks, such as solar panels.
9. Queried whether the Council had ever had to turn down funding. In response, the officers shared that they were not aware of that as of yet. Sometimes there was a triangulation of terms in accepting grants in terms of windows of delivery which were unrealistic. The sector was feeding back the lessons learnt. By the end of 2021/22, the Council had reduced carbon emissions for housing management by 18% based on the 2019 baseline.

The Chair summarised the discussion and thanked the Lead Member, officers, and Cllr. Pascall for attending.

Actions to be completed, with any information requested by the Committee to be sent to the Governance Officer for circulation:

1. The Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services to provide an update on the plans to transition to an electric waste collection fleet when ready.
2. The Neighbourhood Director to provide a full breakdown of the EPC rating of the 9,000 units.
3. The Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services to provide an annual update on the progress to achieving net zero.
4. The Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services to complete an assessment of the amount of carbon absorbed by borough assets, such as trees.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Leadership Team:

1. To retrofit the remaining Council-owned schools by 2030, by building in suitable contingencies to account for inflationary pressures into the budget.
2. To respond to recommendation four of the original report: Progress 2030 net zero offset provision hypothecated to achieve carbon.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25

The Chair invited the Lead Member for Finance, Customer Services and Net Zero, Cllr. Johnny Thalassites, supported by Sue Harris, the Executive Director for Environment and Communities, to introduce the report and the following points were highlighted:

1. The department budget consisted of just under £100 million, however, three-quarters of it came from income, with just over £50 million from parking income. The net budget was around £25 million.
2. Savings were still required, with £1.8 million of planned savings and £775,000 for growth items as well.
3. The Council had to strike a balance between the ambitious commitments of the Council Plan and current financial challenges. This resulted in challenging decisions; however, core services would continue to be protected. The proposals also included opportunities, such as modernising the parking service.

The Chair then invited the Committee, and the Chair of the Budget Working Group, to ask questions on the item and the discussion included the following:

1. Asked for an update on the Customer and Resident-Focused Environmental Services Transformation (CREST) Programme, with particular focus on any short-term costs and long-term savings. The officers shared that there were no proposals to save money on CREST currently. Significant amounts were saved initially, when the police officer element of the scheme was stopped. The budget had remained constant since, with some additional one-off funds to pay for the ward blitzes. There were future plans to invest some money into the digital side to improve the customer experience but the exact cost of that was still being quantified. The only foreseeable change was longer enhancement of hours in the summer, which would require a standalone business case. An upgrade of radio equipment was the only material change, which would be funded through savings.
2. Queried whether night wardens would be introduced for CREST. The officers explained that these were an additional cost which would have to be quantified but it would be six figures. It was important to strike the right balance between routine patrols and being reactive through service requests. The CREST update scheduled to come to Committee in March would provide further details on key performance indicators (KPIs) and ward blitzes.

Action by: Director of Transport and Regulatory Services

3. Enquired about the increasing cost of Notting Hill Carnival (Carnival). In response, officers shared that they were working with strategic partners on a longer-term funding arrangement with the organiser to enable them to look for other funding sources and sponsorship. The department was looking at the possibility of increasing the amount of street trading to increase the income.
4. Asked about food waste. In response, the officers shared that the Government announced it would be providing new burden payments to cover the cost incurred by local authorities for increased food waste and this would be

funded retrospectively from March 2023. There was also a £0 gate fee for food waste which would save around £160 per tonne.

5. Enquired about the 12.5 per cent discount for the two-hour environmental education sessions and whether this was only available for schools. The officers confirmed there was a discount for local authority-run schools, but they would confirm if it was offered to any other organisations.

Action by: *Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services*

6. Queried how the electric waste collection buggies had been funded. The officers confirmed that there were five buggies which had been funded through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) for wards which had made bids for the buggy and driver. These would then be shared with neighbouring wards based on agreements with the ward councillors. The purpose of the buggies was to complete rapid response work. The Lead Member added that if the Council wanted to establish a green waste fleet, this would require a capital bid. Five was a good amount to trial the buggies and they could be expanded if they were effective. The officer confirmed that the waste fleet were all purchased by the Council but operated and maintained by SUEZ.
7. Requested more detail on the proposed saving related to staffing costs. The Committee were informed that this work would take place prior to Christmas (2023) and further detail could be provided in 2024. It was not clear yet what teams the savings would affect.

Action by: *Executive Director of Environment and Communities*

8. Queried whether the Council had a transformative perspective. The officers explained that it was at this stage that they would start to think about transformation and there was a refreshed work programme, whereby each Executive Director would be championing a specific area for three-to-five-year programmes. Staff savings would involve consultation if they were to reduce numbers within a transformation. The Lead Member added that 2025/26 was the hardest year financially in the medium-term financial plan.
9. Queried the 37.5 per cent increase for the 12-month parking permit. The officers explained that it had been the Council's policy to freeze the charge per gram per kilometre of carbon dioxide. The parking service had suggested an eight per cent increase for 2024/25 which was based on the published rate of RPI in September 2023. The service looked at what the average permit currently cost for a vehicle, which was calculated on its carbon dioxide emissions. To achieve the eight per cent increase on the overall cost, they calculated what this would be for the average permit and increased the base charge by this amount (as the other elements of the charge are proposed to remain frozen). The Committee questioned why the decision was not taken to implement an eight per cent increase for both charges (the base charge and the price for g/km of carbon dioxide). It was clarified that it was a policy decision from the Lead Member for Planning and the Public Realm. The Lead Member for Finance, Customer Services and Net Zero reminded the

Committee that the budget was currently out for consultation, and everyone was welcome to respond and make a case for a different approach.

10. Emphasised the importance of staff who provided 'back office' services. The Lead Member agreed and reiterated that the Council Plan provided the framework to enable prioritisation. The Council was well staffed in terms of its base position compared to other local authorities, however, it still needed to operate within the financial circumstances.
11. Enquired about the cost of the refurbishment of Chelsea Bridge. The Lead Member noted that it was significantly less than was being spent on refurbishment of a bridge by a neighbouring local authority. The Committee asked that the specification for the proposed works and the terms of the contract that was the proposed route to market, were reviewed.
12. Asked about the fees for events, such as, the cost of hosting dinner in a room of Leighton House and whether the Council was doing enough to advertise the services effectively. The officers shared that there was a whole new website, marketing campaign, and dedicated team working on this. Events would usually take place outside of normal operating hours where possible. Information on weddings at Leighton House were linked to the registrar service offered at Chelsea Old Town Hall.

The Chair summarised the discussion and thanked the Lead Member and officers, in particular the Executive Director who was leaving her role at the end of the year.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to the Budget Working Group that the Leadership Team:

1. Lobby Government and partners for fairer funding for Notting Hill Carnival to reduce the increasing financial burden on the Council.
2. Manage and report on the pace of the £100m investment in Council netzero2030 and develop a hypothecated RBKC financial provision mechanism for non-performance post 2030.
3. Brief the Environment Select Committee and Budget Working Group on transformation programmes within the next six months, especially regarding the two per cent staff savings to ensure minimal impact on frontline services.
4. Review the detail of the contract to refurbish Chelsea Bridge and for the Council to continue its approach of proactive maintenance to minimise disruption to residents.

Actions to be completed, with any information requested by the Committee to be sent to the Governance Officer for circulation:

1. The Director of Transport and Regulatory Services to include further details on key performance indicators (KPIs) and ward blitzes in the CREST update coming to Environment Select Committee in March

2. The Director of Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services to confirm whether the discount on environmental education sessions was offered to local organisations and charities.
3. The Executive Director for Environment and Communities to provide further detail on the savings related to staffing.

7 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The report was agreed.

The meeting ended at 8.33 pm

Chair

DRAFT