

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny 29th of September

The meeting began with Cllr Mary Watson querying the minutes of the last meeting. Cllr Shone then questioned whether an update on the Clean Living fund had been scheduled in the work programme.

The Committee then heard a report from Gavin Elliott, the Chair of **Manchester: A Certain Future (MACF)**. The presentation was an overview of the group and the Manchester's current position in terms of CO₂ emissions. The report was essentially the same as that in item 6, with an overview of MACF activity (MS: which is very limited).

After the presentation, questions were kicked off by Cllr Austin. He asked a question about VW car emissions, which was topical but not really relevant to the presentation at hand. Cllr Shone asked why Manchester was performing worse (in terms of CO₂ emissions) compared to other Core Cities. Mr Elliott's response was that all cities are different and perhaps it was because Manchester was a post-industrial City. (MS: This exchange highlighted both the poor knowledge of councillors in general and indicated that Mr Elliott is either similarly ignorant or extremely evasive. Nearly all the 'Core Cities' are post-industrial in nature. Mr Elliott referred to Cambridge, which isn't a Core City. Cllr Shone also seemed to have a shaky grasp of what a Core City is). Cllr Fitzpatrick bemoaned the Government's decision to cut solar subsidies. (MS: He didn't point to the Council's years of a half-hearted approach to solar power.) He then asked whether there are any alternative funding streams available for renewable projects. Cllr Watson made a point about behaviour-change focusing on the issue of school runs. (MS: It wasn't entirely clear what the councillor was asking.)

Gavin Elliott in response to these questions said that Sir Richard Leese had informed him seven years ago that the survival of the city was his main concern. He went on to highlight the need for economic growth. (MS: Mr Elliott seems to have accepted this as an acceptable excuse for the Council's under-activity in tackling emissions. This highlights the very close relationship between what is supposed to be an independent body and Mr Leese.)

The Chair, Cllr Gillard, commented that perhaps a new economy not focused on growth was needed. (MS: At the time this got me a bit excited until I remembered that last week he had said that he was a big fan of the airport, and that councillors have a habit of saying vague statements like this which are then never backed up with actions.) The Chair asked how open the MACF meetings were. Mr Elliott said that they weren't as they were boring and dry, and the Chair to his credit pointed out that if members of the public were willing to sit through a Neighbourhoods Committee they could probably handle a MACF meeting. Mr Elliott maintained that there was no need to make MACF more open. (MS: How can MACF inspire confidence when its dealings are so opaque?)

The meeting continued with the latest report into **the Council's CO₂ emissions**. The report was introduced by Executive Officer Cllr Chappell and Jessica Bowles. Cllr Chappell acknowledged that Manchester City Council was likely to miss its goal to reduce emissions to 40% of 2005 levels by 2020. Questions were then asked to the committee by Joseph Clough (formerly of MGP). His questions were as follows:

- 1) Page 6 - Why has energy usage of street-lighting increased by 1% between 13/14 and 14/15?

- 2) Page 8 (para 3.6) - GLL have committed to a 3% year on year reduction in CO₂. What will happen to GLL if it does not honour that commitment? Have Eastlands Trust made the same commitment?
- 3) Page 10 - I would like to query the data in the last columns in the first 4 rows. Why between 13/14 and 14/15 has BE CO₂ stayed the same when BE electricity kWh also stayed the same? Surely CO₂ should have increased between the two years due to the change in the government's emissions factor. What should the data be in these cells? (This anomaly seems to be rectified in the change in total CO₂)
- 4) Appendix 3 - Why has energy consumption increased by 16.6% at Etrop Court and 4% at Arndale New Market?
- 5) Appendix 3 - The table states that MCC no longer procure energy for the football grounds on Platt Lane, and so a value of 0 has been entered for the council's CO₂ emissions for there for the year 14/15. What date did MCC stop procuring electricity for the site? MMU purchased the site in December 2014, halfway through the 14/15 year. If MCC was still procuring energy for the football grounds for part of the 14/15 year, what value should be entered for the CO₂ emissions from the building for that year?

The officers then answered his questions at break-neck speed. Answers were as follows:

- 1) Street-lighting is unmetered. Figures are provided by elexcon. They are carrying out a review and so the increase could be due to this reassessment. LED street-lighting will reduce overall emissions by 12%.
- 2) Performance is monitored across the contract. The council can use penalties and bonuses based on performance. Eastlands Trust is managed differently, it's an arm's-length management grouping owned by the Council. They are looking at aligning their analysis with GLL.
- 3) The data on page 10 is a transposition error.
- 4) The increases at Etrop Court are due to an increase in the number of staff at this site. The Arndale New Market Hall is sensitive to external weather conditions and increases in its usage due to using a lot of refrigeration.
- 5) The Council stopped procuring energy at Platt Lane in November 2014.

It was stated that the Council will use consistent data in the future.

The questions were briefly interrupted by Cllr Loughman who seemed to object to the idea that a member of the public should be able to ask questions. Cllr Watson requested that in future questions should be circulated by the chair to members before the meeting. Councillors proceeded to ask questions which were all less relevant and less targeted than Mr Clough's. They included questions about: the high emissions from the Library (a), the completion date of converting street lighting to LED (b), what the Council's grey fleet is (c), the feasibility of moving towards all-electric car use from the Car Club (d) and how energy audits of buildings are conducted (e). The response from the officer was as follows:

- a) The higher amount of technology in the Library building and its greater use are why, despite efficiencies having been made, energy usage is high. (MS: which points to the low ambitions the council accepts in terms of energy efficiencies.)
- b) The LED street lighting programme will start this financial year and last 2 years.

- c) The grey fleet is contracted business travel. (MS: The exact meaning of this was unclear.)
- d) The feasibility of electric cars for the Car Club would be looked into.
- e) Energy audits are done on a building by building basis.

Cllr Shone asked a question about the total CO₂ output of council buildings. (MS: The answer to her question was clearly contained in the report. To give her some credit, the table, like a large number of tables produced in council reports, isn't labelled very well.)

The meeting then progressed to the **Tree Strategy**. Cllr Chappell and the Jessica Bowles briefly outlined that the Tree Strategy Refresh was contained in the Green and Blue Infrastructure plan. Councillors asked a number of questions these included ones concerning: the pruning of trees (a), the removal of trees (b), the need for appropriate planting of trees (c), the importance of trees (d), the role of councillors in the management of trees (e), involving other groups in the protection of trees (f), problems associated with trees e.g. blocking TV reception (g), the need to back talk of green infrastructure with resources (h) and the positive or otherwise impact of the now removed role of tree wardens (i).

The answers were as follows:

- a) Trees are inspected every 2 or 3 years but there is a bit of a back log.
- b) Trees are only removed as a last resort.
- c) Appropriate planting was said to be done and that a scheme in Salford which aims to contain roots was being looked into.
- d) It was agreed that trees are important.
- e) It was mentioned that councillors might be more involved, but there were no commitments made.
- f) The involvement of groups was noted and involving other groups was said to be important.
- g) The general answer was a bit confused, but seemed to generally be more pro-tree rather than pro-TV reception.
- h) There was no real response to backing talk with resources.
- i) The quality of tree wardens was said to have vastly differed in different areas.

(MS: The above was very frustrating to listen to as I had submitted questions which were then not read out (at the time of writing I am still awaiting answers to my questions). As usual, the majority of councillors used their time to make general statements, rather than critically engaging with the report in hand.)

The meeting then proceeded to item 8, a **report on carbon emissions associated with travel**. Kate Chappell introduced the item by acknowledging again that the Council would probably not meet its reduction targets. She noted the anticipated shortfall would be 17.5%. Councillors then asked the following: what happens if targets are not met (a), should the Council look at banning high-emission vehicles from the city (b), why has there been mention of 2040 target if we aren't meeting current targets (c), what is being done to ensure that car provision is not being removed before there are alternatives in place (d), when was the last time bus emissions were checked in the city centre (e), will more environmentally friendly buses be introduced (f), what is being done to ensure that transport plans are less city centre focused (g), what is being done to ensure that the alternative to cars is cheaper

enough (h) and should we keep to the 41% target for the next 5 years even if we know we are going to miss it (i). In and around the questions there were also a number of statements welcoming what progress has been made and around the problems of making changes.

The answers were as follows:

- a) It was stated that nothing will happen if the targets are not met.
- b) Banning high-emission vehicles from the city centre was said to be under consideration
- c) It was noted that there was a need to start work on future plans now.
- d) It was said that a car-free city centre was not a goal. It was stressed that transport was policy would continue to be looked at in the round.
- e) The officer didn't know whether checks on city centre bus emissions were being done (MS: which probably means they aren't).
- f) Environmentally friendly buses was said to be an option when Greater Manchester gains control of the buses.
- g) In terms of less of a city-centre focus for transport, there were mentions of plans to improve travel to the airport and to Stockport. (MS: The response does not instil any confidence in me that the plans would place any emphasis on improving travel outside of the city centre.)
- h) The issue of the cost of alternatives to car travel was not directly addressed.
- i) There was a lot of discussion on whether to keep the target. It was generally agreed that targets should be ambitious and that missing targets shouldn't mean that the Council stops trying to meet them.

(MS: Sorry to repeat myself, but it would be nice to hear more councillors ask specific questions about the report as well as making general statements.)

There was then a brief discussion of the committee's work programme, and finally the meeting concluded.

MS: I'm sorry for the length of these notes. My only excuse is that the meeting over ran and was two and half hours long, so it was very hard to get them any shorter.

I would also like to note that this was the last meeting of this committee to be chaired by Cllr Daniel Gillard. I think that this is a shame as he seemed to be one of the more competent and insightful chairs and committee members.

The above is an abridged impression of the meeting. For more detail please contact me at: mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk

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