



Briefing note on the “The Role of Neighbourhood Teams In Developing Local Climate Change Activity and Partnership Working”

by Climate Emergency Manchester and supporters, for the benefit of Councillors and citizens

Introduction	2
Disclaimers	2
Comments	2
Questions	3
1 Why has so little been spent?	3
2. How is “In our Nature” being assessed for value for money? By who? When? On what metrics?	3
3. Will the “Communications Plan” be based on standards?	3
4. Have the actions promised for COP 26 happened?	4
5. Which Councillors will be prioritised for learning sessions? When will all councillors have completed this training?	4
Recommendations	4
General	4
Specific	5

Introduction

This briefing note examines “The Role of Neighbourhood Teams In Developing Local Climate Change Activity and Partnership Working” (to be discussed at Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, on Thursday November 11th 2021).

The paper shows that activity is underway in neighbourhoods across the city. However, it is difficult to understand how these initiatives fit together and where gaps or barriers persist. There is little mention of evaluation, Learnings seem to be scheduled for the future. Serious questions remain about what has worked and what needs to be prioritised next.

There is no acknowledgement that the Climate Emergency declaration of July 2019 called for all ward plans to include climate action. Two and a half years later, by the Council’s own admission (see 3.2), only “six wards are holding their own climate change emergency events. Outcomes from these will be built in their Ward Climate Change Action Plans.”

No explanation is forthcoming for this slow progress, which has been highlighted in several of Climate Emergency Manchester’s “Hung Drawn and Quarterly” reports. Without acknowledging barriers to action (a theme the climate change “Agency” seems keen on presently), how is the Council expecting to accelerate its activity radically? Or does it not see the need to radically accelerate its action?

Disclaimers

This briefing paper is not intended to pre-empt or undermine the role of [Environment](#) and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee or the independence of its members. The questions are by no means an exhaustive list.

Comments

- There are incipient signs of progress in this report. Or at least, the promise of progress to come. However, future reports should cover all 32 wards in a more systematic fashion, and be clear about what is - or is not - happening in each of the city’s 32 wards.

Questions

1 Why has so little been spent?

- **In 4.2 we are told** “£57,000 of NIF funding was approved for local climate change projects last financial year (2020/21) and this is expected to increase this financial year (2021/22).”

We are also told that each ward has a Neighbourhood Investment Fund of £20,000 £640,000 is available for the city. Less than 12% of the monies available went towards projects relating to climate change.

Why was so little spent? How many applications were there? How many were rejected? What reasons were there for the rejections? What support will be provided for residents who wish to apply in the future, as putting together a funding bid is not straightforward for all residents?

The paper provides a ‘selection’ of funded projects but does not state how many projects were funded nor how they were assessed.

Relatedly, the paper makes a number of references to projects which are dependent on external funding (e.g. the **National Lottery Climate Change Funded Projects in 7.0**) with little sense of alternatives when the funding runs out or is not renewed. Relatedly, the Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers have undertaken a huge amount of valuable work but are on short term contracts. With this precarity, it seems difficult for them to undertake long-term planning and there is a danger that the team will lose their knowledge and their experience as they seek a post with better job security.

2. How is “In our Nature” being assessed for value for money? By who? When? On what metrics?

- Is the “In Our Nature” programme actually reaching anyone? For example, as of 7th November 2021, [this video](#) has had 42 views from a population of [576,500](#) .

3. Will the “Communications Plan” be based on standards?

- In 11.1 we are told “MCC communications team will be developing a city-wide communications campaign in the new year following the completion of the ward climate action plans”. So, how many ward plans are going to have climate components? Will

there be a centrally available database of all the ward plans for residents to see what is happening in other wards? Will the Communications Plan be checked for accuracy before it goes out and will there be a set of guidelines for MCC social media? Will there be any attempt to reach beyond English-speakers? If so, what will that be?

4. Have the actions promised for COP 26 happened?

- Has the promised document about the outcome of the Climate Assembly, due for release on October 29 (a date confirmed at last ECC), been published and widely communicated? If not, when is it due? Presentation at COP26 will not help it reach residents in Manchester.
- Information about the Community Assembly is accessible when clicking through the In Our Nature website. However, the information is dense and the mandate does not make clear which actions are within the power of local government?
- In 11.2 we are told *“At the ward level, activities have been planned for this period such as ward climate events in Ardwick and the city centre, an anti-idling day of action and a relaunch of the commercial waste project in the city centre.”* Is this a ‘selection’ of events or the full extent? Throughout, the style of the report makes it difficult to assess what has happened beyond the given examples?

5. Which Councillors will be prioritised for learning sessions? When will all councillors have completed this training?

- In 13.1 we learn *“To assist Councillors develop their knowledge to have a discussion with residents it is planned to develop a series of member learning sessions with councillors. The sessions will enable Councillors to discuss and share information on issues faced in developing their Ward Climate Change Action Plans.... It is planned to roll out the first of these sessions in the current calendar year.”*

This is good! When will this first training take place? How many councillors per session? Will the training be mandatory and if not, what will the leader of the Council do to encourage councillors to undertake this training?

Recommendations

General

- **Quarterly updates on progress of ward climate action plans** - While it is encouraging that *“Progress of ward climate action plans will be reported quarterly”*, this should be a written report, against consistently reported baselines.
- **Quarterly review of the role of the Neighbourhoods Directorate** - beyond the ward plans

- **ECC Scrutiny Committee should look a** should look at the role of all Directorates in the Climate Emergency - not just Neighbourhoods

Specific

- Whenever reports mention “Manchester has a target of becoming a zero-carbon city by 2038” (see for example 2.1) they must also mention that the city has now burned 40% of its carbon budget for the entire 21st century in the last three years alone.