

# Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 19 October 2023

### Attendance

#### Members of the Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Mary Bateman  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Sally Green  
Cllr Linda Leach  
Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN  
Cllr Andrew McNeil  
Cllr Rohit Mistry  
Cllr Anwen Muston (Chair)  
Cllr John Reynolds

#### In attendance

Cllr Craig Collingswood

Cabinet Member for Environment and  
Climate Change

#### Employees

Liz Grimshaw  
David Pattison  
John Roseblade  
Perminder Balu  
Martin Stevens  
Steve Woodward  
Claire Walters

Commercial Operations Manager  
Chief Operating Officer  
Director of Resident Services  
Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy  
Scrutiny Team Leader  
Head of Environmental Services  
Environmental Place Based Development  
Manager  
Section Leader: Fly Tipping

Thomas Hawkins,

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1            **Apologies**  
Apologies for absence received for the following Councillors:

Cllr Wendy Dalton  
Cllr Stephanie Haynes  
Cllr Jaszemma Howl

Cllr Ellis Turrell substitute for Cllr Wendy Dalton

- 2            **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest recorded.

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### **Council 2028 Net Zero Progress Review (report to follow)**

The Chair invited Cllr Craig Collingswood, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, to make some introductory comments to the report. The Cabinet Member commented on his priority since being appointed was to ensure that Council was moving in the right direction to achieve its net zero target by 2028.

The Cabinet Member advised the panel that based on review of evidence that progress is being made highlighting the reduction in the Council's carbon footprint by over a third since 2019. The Cabinet Member offered the meet to discuss issue of concern with Councillors at a future date.

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, advised the panel that he was appointed in 2022 to be the responsible officer ensuring that there was one council approach to delivering critical aspects of the climate action. The aim was to be adopt the approach taken on the approach to equalities, diversity, and inclusion where the focus was on working collectively across the Council to ensure action led to significant improvements.

The Chief Operating Officer introduced Perminder Balu, Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy, who was appointed in 2023 to role and would provide a summary of the main report to the panel.

The Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy thanked the panel for the opportunity to present the report and commented on building on the One Council approach to help move things forward in achieving climate change goals.

The Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy commented that following the climate change emergency declaration in 2019 the Council set out an ambition to achieve Net Zero for the City across "all Council activities" by 2028. There is also a commitment to support decarbonisation across the city by 2041, in line with regional targets.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy updated the panel on progress since the 'Future Generations: Our Commitment' document was approved at Full Council in September 2020. The document sets out the Council's commitment to reducing emissions from centralised corporate controlled sources, for example, gas central heating from corporate buildings.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy commented on the findings from a recent benchmarking exercise with 19 similar local authorities and the results showed the Council's approach to meetings its corporate net zero emission targets were similar.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy commented on progress to date and changes to 2028 Net Zero Action Plan published in July 2021. The success of the Climate Change Advisory Group referred to by the Cabinet Member was highlighted. The minutes and agendas from the meetings are available to the public on the Council website.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy advised the panel that as part of the Council's commitment to transparency a climate action assessment tool has been introduced. The tool will be used when consideration is being given to take forward any new projects or schemes and to identify opportunities to further reduce the carbon footprint of the scheme.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy commented that the Climate Action Programme Board meet regularly to check on progress of the action and this also provides a process to escalate matters to the Chief Operating Officer.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy advised the panel that 17 of the actions on the Net Zero Action Plan have been completed and further actions will be completed over the next few months. There is a detailed reporting mechanism, and this will be supported by the development of a new dashboard that will be shared with officers and directors to help keep people updated on progress.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy advised the panel about the progress of three key interventions aimed at achieving Net Zero target by 2028 which have been completed during the last 12 – 18 months. The achievement of 40 per cent reduction in energy use was the equivalent in savings of about £2 million.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy added that about 85 per cent of the streetlights with low efficiency bulbs being replaced by more efficient LEDs. There were further examples given of the progress made to deliver deliverables (quick wins) which can achieve large carbon reductions and energy cost savings without significant investment.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy commented that the Council needs to make a concerted effort to move forward and explore other options to help it make further progress to achieving its Net Zero climate change goal. The commitment of the team and the Council to this aim was praised.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the report and invited panel members to comment.

A panel member congratulated the presenter on the report and considered that it was very informative and a significant improvement on earlier reports. The consistent use of measures and metrics in the report was welcomed. The panel member commented on the difficulties in changing the culture of in organisations and businesses and queried if there were any objectives for the senior leadership team to drive forward cultural change needed.

The Chief Operating Officer acknowledged the importance of changing the culture and that he was appointed to lead a One Council approach referred to earlier and provide the level of challenge needed to achieve this. The success of new projects listed in the report were highlighted as good examples of this approach in offering challenge at the early stage and asking if this could be done in a way to have a more positive impact on climate change goals.

A panel member queried the costs involved in switching to alternative fuels, the value for money considerations and the capital costs of making major changes to fleet vehicles were requested.

The Chief Operating Officer reassured the panel that the funding for different projects is being achieved within existing budgets but accepted that other future schemes may well have significant potential budget and capital revenue implications. The funding for these projects will be built into the budgets going forward and will be presented as part of the budget setting process in February 2024 for Councillors to consider.

A panel member commented on future budget challenges which will make harder to achieve the climate change goals.

The Chief Operating Officer acknowledged that there will be a need for additional funding and the Council will be looking to maximise opportunities from central government to secure funds to support this. The Chief Operating Officer commented that with reference to changing fleet vehicles to use HVO (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil) that the challenge was the affordability and availability of electric vehicles which is leading to lengthy waits.

The Head of Green City and Circular Economy reassured the panel that no mechanical changes were needed to vehicles as the HVO is a drop-in replacement so there is no other cost to the Council than the fuel used. There are no additional costs related to the vehicle fleet because of this change.

The panel discussed the wider impact and additional costs to the Council and residents of adapting to meet climate change targets and the possibility of grants to help meet the costs. The issue will be discussed at future meeting of the panel.

A panel member commented on the Government Net Zero Target of 2050 and queried the rationale for the Council setting a target of 2028 to achieve this while other local authorities used for comparison in the report have set a target of 2030. There was concern about setting this target date without having details about the full costs involved. The report refers to the challenges to achieving the Net Zero Target and there was concern these will add further costs.

A panel member queried if the internal audit review (March 2023) of the Council's climate change programme has been published and if so, a request was made for it be shared with the panel. There was concern expressed about the reference in the audit report following a review of progress which stated that some targets have not been achieved.

The Chief Operating Officer advised the panel that the decision to set the commitment to 2028 as target for Net Zero was made by Council in 2019 and the reasons were set out at the time.

The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that copies of the audit report can be shared with the panel.

The Chief Operating Officer acknowledged the issues about climate change related costs and the uncertainty about estimating future costs. The Chief Operating Officer commented on the impact of the volatility in the market for electric vehicles as an example of the challenge in finding cost effective and value for money solutions that will deliver the Council's commitment to achieve its Net Zero target. The Chief Operating Officer added that Wolverhampton is the first authority to undertake an audit review.

The Chair invited Cabinet Member to make a few closing comments on the report.

The Cabinet Member thanked the panel for the comments and stated his commitment to the Council reaching Net Zero target by the end of 2028. The Cabinet Member commented on his commitment to openness and transparency in decision making, highlighting the decision when appointed Chair of Climate Advisory Group to ensure minutes of the meeting were published. The Cabinet Member was happy to meet with panel members to talk about ideas that support progress towards reaching the Net Zero target.

Resolved:

The Panel agreed to receive a progress report on the Net Zero Action Plan in October 2024.

#### 4 **Fly Tipping Update**

The Chair invited Craig Collingswood, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, to make some introductory remarks. The Cabinet Member commented that the issue of fly tipping is a key concern of residents based on the number of complaints received. The issue of fly tipping is an endemic problem nationally. The Cabinet Member commented that the approach taken in response to this has been to develop innovative solutions and achieve the best that can be done with the resources available.

The Cabinet Member offered the panel reassurance that he and the members of the team area are doing everything possible to develop innovative solutions across the City which will be outlined in the presentation.

The Chair invited John Roseblade, Director of Resident Services, to make some comments. The Director acknowledged that the issue of fly-tipping is high in the casework of Councillors and welcomed the opportunity to bring the issue to the panel talk about the work being done to think differently to find solutions based on use of good local intelligence in how resources are used.

The Chair invited Steve Woodward, Head of Environmental Services, and Claire Walters, Edwards Environmental Place Based Development Manager, Liz Grimshaw, Environmental Project Manager and Thomas Hawkins, Section Leader: Fly Tipping to give their presentation.

The Head of Environmental Services that colleagues would be presenting different sections within their areas of responsibility.

The Head of Environmental Services commented that the issue of fly tipping as stated by the Cabinet Member is a national issue, but the report will set out the positive measures being taken to combat the issue in Wolverhampton.

The Head of Environmental Services outlined the main headlines to provide an overview of the current situation. The Head of Environmental Services commented that the issue of fly tipping remains a constant challenge and that is an ever-evolving issue that the service is working to deal with. The Head of Environmental Services reassured the panel that progress is being made to deal with issues about fly tipping reported by councillors and the public.

Claire Walters, Environmental Place Based Development Manager, gave an overview of the Shop a Tipper project.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that the approach of the project is evidence based.

There is also a recognition that because Wolverhampton is a very diverse city it is important to better understand the reasons why someone would fly tip in an area and develop the right local interventions to respond to the issue.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that in trying to understand why people fly tip, three groups were identified:

- people who do not know what they are doing is wrong in terms of leaving rubbish outside of their home for the Council to collect.
- people who can't dispose of their waste correctly because landlords of Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are not giving them the opportunity to do the right thing.
- residents who just won't do the right thing and know what they are doing is wrong.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager highlighted the importance of using the right interventions to support people in each the groups, while acknowledging that different methods will be used at the ward level, and in some situations a different street by street approach will be needed.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that 70 percent fly tipping incidents across the city consists of bagged domestic waste and explained the difficulty of getting prosecutions or fines for people fly tipping due level of evidence needed. The importance of the public in reporting incidents of people fly tipping was highlighted.

Liz Grimshaw, Environmental Project Manager, gave further details about three stages of the Shop a Tipper Project

Stage 1 – education – for example, a letter is sent to all residents and businesses identified as having a persistent issue with fly-tipping.

Stage 2 – intervention – for example, CCTV is installed.

Stage 3 – enforcement – for example, captured images are passed to the Council's enforcement team.

The Environmental Project Manager commented on how enforcement officers use reports from the public via the Love Clean Street app is used to log reports on the Confirm Connect system, which is monitored by Operational Managers.

The Environmental Project Manager commented on results from Phase 1 of the Shop a Tipper project and highlighting key successes and the positive feedback reported in resident survey about the approach of the Council to fly tipping incidents.

The Environmental Project Manager commented on the new developments for Phase 2 of the Shop a Tipper project. In this stage of the project, it will assess if the impact is not simply displacing the fly tipping issue from one street to another.

The Environmental Project Manager added that nearly 70 per cent of fly-tipping in the city consists of bagged waste and that these incidents will be mapped against bin collection dates to consider if work is needed to provide education on waste disposal.

Thomas Hawkins, Section Leader: Fly Tipping gave details about the impact of the introduction of four new SMART CCTVs which also use AI to identify when fly tipping is happening to capture it and alert us to enable a quick response and increasing the Council's evidence gathering capability.

The Section Leader commented on the advantages of the new system compared to the current camera technology.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented on the reconfiguration of roles within the environmental crime team, from November 2023. The changes led to the creation of two full time dedicated resources in the Environmental Crime team to address and enforce against action against fly tipping.

The Section Leader commented on the approach to addressing issues relating to fly tipping and the specific action be taken now and in the future.

The Section Leader commented that the introduction of extra cameras to the project will enable more fines for fly-tipping to be issued. The Government has introduced a change to allow increases in maximum fine limits for fly-tipping from £400 up to £1000. The Section Leader commented that a sliding scale of fines would allow the team to deal with more cases by issuing fixed penalties rather than taking the matter to court to seek a higher fine and help to ease workload pressures on the Environmental Crime team.

The Section Leader commented on the importance of education and the introduction of QR codes in information leaflets sent to residents. The QR code link provides information on waste disposal in different languages and other help. In addition, where fly tipping incidents occur on land where the ownership is not clear then consideration will be given to fencing the area to provide a barrier to further incidents.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.

A panel member congratulated the presenters on the excellent performance of the report and highlighted the Love Clean Street app which allows incidents to be reported easily. There have been reports however from the public who have had problems using the app and suggested that this issue should be investigated.

A panel queried the number of people who have paid fines for fly-tipping and if the level of fines was set at level to have the necessary effect of deterring landlords and businesses from fly tipping. The suggestion of having a special day where a skip was provided to allow people to get rid of their rubbish and large white goods items and residents offered help by the Council. The service could be promoted by flyers.

The Director thanked the panel member for the positive comments about the service.

The Director commented in response to the idea of the Council providing a collection skip for residents that there is a difference between someone who cannot afford the cost of transporting rubbish to the special site and someone who does not know how to do dispose of the rubbish properly which presents a challenge to the service.

The Director advised the panel the approach to issuing of fines is do so when it is proportionate and appropriate to do so.

The Director commented about the use CCTV in hot spot areas for fly tipping such as orphan or private site and other work to protect sites at risk. The Director added that the Council will work with landowners to remove rubbish from derelict sites, especially in prominent areas with high footfall and highlighted the importance of giving a good first impression of the city. There is more work to be done to deal with issue involving private landowners in a more holistic way, for example, introducing service level agreements where rubbish will be removed from private land and issues of responsibility will be resolved later.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager agreed to contact customer services about the issues with Love Clean Street app and report back to the panel.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that there is a risk when providing a skip for residents it will reinforce the message that you can dump rubbish anywhere and the Council will remove it for free and encourage poor behaviour. A better approach suggested is working with colleagues in Public Health to identify specific areas and offer support and education people to encourage people to do the right thing.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that payments for FPN fines and Court costs are sent to Council. The money from issuing fines is used to invest in developments such as smart cameras and target hardening on orphan land to avoid having to spend money on cleaning the area when litter is blown onto the site.

A panel commented on the issue of fly tipping involving commercial offenders and queried the approach to managing litter from larger commercial public events.

The Section Leader: Fly Tipping reassured the panel as regards issuing fines that where the Council get information and evidence, involving a business or resident then action will be taken. The Section Leader added that the Council works closely with neighbouring authorities to tackle issues of cross border fly tipping incidents.

The Section Leader suggested that the maximum £400 fixed penalty notice may be adequate for a one-off offence but incidents involving commercial companies dumping large amounts of waste collected for fee then more severe penalties should be available, such as seizing vehicles.

A panel member raised concerns about domestic and commercial waste being dumped in the ward. The issue of the high turnover of tenants in HMOs was highlighted as a challenge to the Council when dealing with repeated requests for replacement bins.

The suggestion of offering business more attractive trade waste collection service was proposed as a possible solution that should be considered. The issue of contaminated trade waste bins and fly tipping around bins was highlighted.

A panel member suggested information on refuse collection could added as a sticker to bins to help new tenants in HMOs whose first language is not English as an alternative to the Love Clean Streets app.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented on the challenges in educating residents in HMOs when the turnover is so high and would mean offering support to different people on a regular basis. An alternative approach is based on the idea that tenants may change but the bins for the property will stay the same. There is work being done to develop a QR Code that will be added to a sticker and placed on the bins for HMO properties. The link would allow the tenant to scan the code and choose the language required which will give information on refuse collection and advice on how refuse waste can be disposed. The service is working with private sector housing providers and the idea of including in the proposed selective licensing conditions a requirement to provide adequate means for people to get rid of their waste.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager acknowledged businesses are free to choose who and the amount they pay companies for trade waste collection services, which the Council has no control over. The Council has an excellent commercial waste collection business and continues to develop different projects and pilot initiatives to try and address the concerns highlighted.

A panel member welcomed the plans to purchase new CCTV cameras and commented on the critical role in dealing with fly tipping, particularly on private land.

A panel member commented on the recent decision by South Staffordshire Council to increase the level of fixed penalty fines to £1000 and suggested that the Council should follow this change. There was concern that the people living in South Staffordshire may be more willing to fly tip in Wolverhampton and an increase in the maximum would also send an important message to the public.

The Environmental Place Based Development Manager commented that the need to carefully consider the policy implications of increasing the maximum fine, highlighting the situation where a fine is not paid would involve further court action.

There was also concern about the deterrent effect of a higher maximum fine on commercial operators and the impact for individuals and whether they would be able to pay the higher fee. The current maximum fee level of £400 was considered to be a deterrent. The Environmental Place Based Development Manager reassured the panel about wanting to take the appropriate enforcement action.

The Cabinet Member commented that he was very proud of the work done since his appointment to make the issue of tackling fly tipping a priority and hoped that the panel has seen this evening examples of how innovation and intelligence is being used to improve the situation. The success of the prosecutions because of Shop a Tipper campaign was highlighted and the service will continue to be proactive in media and promotional material.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive comments from panel members about the work being done to tackle the issue of fly tipping and agreed to consider further the ideas suggested during the meeting.

The panel discussed the merits of the recommendation to Cabinet to consider the increasing the maximum level of FPN fines for fly tipping from £400 to £1,000.

There was agreement about need for a decision about any proposed increase in the maximum fine to be proportionate and also consider the individual's financial circumstances.

Resolved:

The panel recommendations to the Cabinet Member to consider.

1. To avoid duplication of waste collection services between the Council and Wolverhampton Homes that the service provided by Wolverhampton Homes should be brought back in-house.
2. Further work to improve the fly tipping collection service that will address issues highlighted by the panel during the meeting.
3. The introduction of an upper limit of £1000 maximum for fly tipping, but it should be proportionate and consider a person's financial circumstances.
4. The Council's bulky item collection service should be promoted further on the Council website and the material should also be available in written form.

5 **Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2023 – 2024**

The Chair invited Martin Stevens (DL) Scrutiny Officer to present the report.

The Scrutiny Officer gave a brief overview of future items on the panel work programme.

The panel were invited to comment on the draft work programme.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.