

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 February 2023

Present: Councillor Osborn (Chair)
Councillor Ezeifedi (Vice Chair)
Councillors Ahmed, Allen-Williamson, Jeffree, Kloss, Martins and Turmaine

Also present: Councillor Hofman (Chair of Sustainability Strategy Task Group)
Councillor Stotesbury (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability)

Officers: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy
Senior Transport and Infrastructure Project Manger
Senior Democratic Services Officer

64. **Sustainability Strategy Task Group final report**

The scrutiny committee received the final report of the Sustainability Strategy Task Group.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer set out the purpose of the item which was to ensure the recommendations were coherent and as the formal scrutiny committee, it was for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to recommend the report to Cabinet.

The chair of the task group, Councillor Mark Hofman, introduced the report. Setting out the urgency of the issue, he noted that global carbon emissions were at record levels with a 50% chance that an increase of 1.5°C in global temperatures would be exceeded in the next 9 years. The council's existing sustainability strategy expired in March and the task group gave non-executive members a chance to feed in. The report recognised that the targets were challenging and would require coordinated effort to lead the local response which would have a positive impact on thousands of residents.

Responding to a question about the recommendation to increase the target for the percentage of households taking climate actions, the task group chair explained that it was an emergency situation and the census had shown that Watford had a young demography. Numerous studies had demonstrated that younger and more educated people were more likely to engage in climate action. Many older residents were also climate aware. The monitoring of this target would be in the delivery plan and there would be an online platform to record pledges of action.

The Portfolio Holder added that the task group had had lots of good conversations and he fully supported the recommendations. The latest iteration of the report would reflect some of them. He confirmed the delivery plan would come to Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Forum.

Councillor Ahmed noted that there were a large number of taxis in Watford which contributed to air pollution and asked whether there could be a limitation on taxi vehicles from outside the area as part of the strategy. Declaring an interest, he noted that he was a member of the taxi trade. It was noted that it was not possible to show a preference for different drivers or firms and the discussion would be picked up outside the committee meeting.

Turning to the recommendation around strengthening sustainability considerations in decision-making, the committee noted that the approach to procurement was key to this aim. Further there was an internal board at corporate level to oversee sustainability at the council.

It was further noted that the task group discussed the issues carefully taking into consideration the range of views held by task group members.

Considering the targets further, it was confirmed that the delivery plan would contain more detail on delivery mechanisms and any targets for individual services. The target profile had been built with an external consultancy, confirming the need for off-setting for certain sectors. Noting a comment about interim targets, the Portfolio Holder agreed to take the point away.

RESOLVED –

the final report and recommendations of the Sustainability Strategy Task Group be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet.