

FINCHLEY & GOLDERS GREEN RESIDENTS FORUM

Tuesday, 23 November 2010

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE FORUM MEETING

	Issue Raised	Response
1.	<p>Petition – Opposition to removal of the Oak Trees in Erskine Hill, NW11 Lead Petitioner: Siddiek Meer – 34 signatures</p>	<p>The Council is considering options at this time regarding the future of the Oak trees at Erskine Hill as per the correspondence issued to residents.</p> <p>There are eleven Oak trees, of which three have been identified in subsidence cases and require removal, a further tree is also implicated in a case; the site investigation data is awaited. Subsequently three or four trees will need to be removed, leaving a minimum of seven. The current treatment for maintaining these trees is proving ineffective and the remaining seven will require a 40% reduction and on-going maintenance. Following discussions regarding the requirements for the above it was suggested that removing all of the remaining trees and replacing them may be a better option, it should be noted that the trees have a life expectancy of 10/20 years. Ward members and residents are now being consulted for their views on this possible approach. 45 houses were asked for their views, to which 23 replied, 11 against and 12 for.</p> <p>No decisions have been made on what course of treatment will be taken, view of residents is simply being collated at this time, the outcome of this will then determine any future course of action.</p> <p>Jenny Warren – Greenspaces Service Manager</p>
2.	<p>Although I have now received a written reply in regard to questions asked at the last Forum about the authority's consultation process, one of the questions, on the subject of the 'Ideas Barnet' website, has apparently been misunderstood. My question was about the integrity, rather than the 'integration', of the ideas submitted. It is widely believed that a large number of the ideas included on this site are not, as they purport to be, genuine suggestions from residents, and I would therefore like to ask of the 187 or so ideas on the site, how many can be verified, by means of email addresses, post codes etc, as being from individuals with no connection to the authority?</p> <p>Ms Teresa Killick</p>	<p>Both Residents and staff who are residents of Barnet have been encouraged to submit their ideas to the website.</p> <p>In particular the early ideas on the site were submitted by staff as they tested a beta version of the site. These stayed on the site to launch it. In the main these tend to be specifically internal issues. The only other element where staff posted ideas in their work roles were ideas gathered at the Civic Forum. This are credited to the Forum.</p> <p>To ensure confidentiality the ideas are anonymous and the website does not allow the Council to correlate ideas that have been posted to names and e mail addresses that been submitted.</p>

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		<p>The reason why the Council has done this is that we wanted to ensure the lowest possible barrier of entry to posting ideas on the site. We also wanted to encourage people to submit ideas within the limits of acceptability that we set around our moderation policy and this has therefore encouraged many ideas about controversial subjects that people may not have felt able to contribute if we had publicly displayed their name and email address.</p> <p>We allowed people to record their name and email address in the ideas submission form so that we could optionally email all of those people at the end of the process to explain what we did as a result of it.</p> <p>The Ideas website is an innovative way for Council to engage with our residents, not only allowing residents to feedback their views and ideas to the Council, but it also allows us to see how many other residents agree with these ideas and furthermore allows residents to engage with each other and rate each other's ideas. The Council plans to use the Ideas website for other engagement activities in the future and we would welcome your input on how we might develop it further.</p> <p>Lastly, we would just like to assure you that the council and its staff (many whom are residents) main objective is to ensure Barnet is a good place to live and provide quality services to our residents. It is these engagement activities which allow us to understand resident's views in-depth in order to make improvements and it would be a shame not to continue using the Idea Website.</p> <p>Rosie Evangelou, Consultation and Insight Officer Chris Palmer, Assistant Director, Communications</p>
3.	<p>There have been several stories reported in the local press expressing dissatisfaction with the lighting renewal project in this borough. Councillor Coleman assured the last full council meeting that this project was 'a good news story' yet the website of the contractors still has 18 roads in 2009, and 19 roads in the current year, listed as 'not scheduled', and are therefore not completed. This might imply that the project is in fact better described as a 'bad news story'. Why is the project running behind schedule, and when will the work be satisfactorily completed?</p> <p>Ms Teresa Killick</p>	<p>The Street Lighting replacement programme covers 70% of the roads in the borough and therefore is a very large undertaking. There are occasions when it is necessary to change the order of the programme due to circumstances outside of the control of the Authority and the Service Provider. Where a road is not carried out in the original sequence it will be replaced with a road which was planned later in the programme. The authority expect the Service Provider to update the details of these changes on there website and this has not been carried out as diligently as we would have hoped.</p>

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		<p>This has been addressed with the Service Provider and they are currently updating the website and have attached a message to identify that this is in progress. We and our Service Provider apologise for any confusion due to the delays in updating the progress of the column replacement programme. It is expected that the programme will be completed by the end of this financial year as planned.</p> <p>Paul Bragg – Highways Manager – Network Management, Environment and Operations</p>
4.	<p>At the last full Council meeting, in response to a question about stopping sites for members of the gypsy/traveller community, Councillor Richard Cornelius stated that this authority has always failed to identify a single site in the borough suitable for accommodating the needs of such people. The London Borough of Barnet is almost unique in failing ever to provide any stopping place for gypsy families, even to the extent of ignoring its statutory duties under previous legislation. It could easily be argued that this represents a form of discrimination against gypsies and travellers, who are of course recognised in law as belonging to an ethnic minority. I would like to know what this authority has done, over the last eight years, actively to locate and consider sites suitable for such a purpose, including, but not solely, in response to the recent but now abandoned proposal for a site by the Mayor of London.</p> <p>Ms Teresa Killick</p>	<p>The issue has not been finalised. The provision for gypsies and travellers is still a matter for debate at a Londonwide level. The issue will be discussed at the London Plan Examination in Public (EIP) on 7 December. Following the EIP a report will be submitted to the Mayor and he will move forward to adopt the London Plan in mid 2011. Barnet's Core Strategy is required to be in general conformity with the London Plan. Our strategy should therefore be consistent with the Mayor's as regards provision for gypsies and travellers.</p> <p>Nick Lynch – Planning Policy Manager</p>
4.	<p>The register of councillors' interests, gifts and hospitality has at last become available online, although seven members have been allowed to 'opt out' of what is presumably intended to be an exercise demonstrating a commitment to 'transparency'. Rather confusingly, some of the Councillors whose declarations do appear on the online register appear reluctant to give details of their homes in the Borough. Without implying any deliberate wrongdoing on the part of any individuals, it is stated on the register that it is a breach of the code of conduct for members 'to omit information that ought to be given in this notice' or 'to provide information that is materially false or misleading'.</p>	<p>Council agreed that Councillors who did not wish their entries to be published online could opt out of doing so and continue to have their declarations published in the hard copy register maintained and available for inspection by members of the public at the Council's offices. The register of interests forms completed by Members set out the requirements for declaring interests in property within the Borough.</p> <p>Jeff Lustig – Director of Corporate Governance</p>

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	<p>Can you clarify the rules on the declaration of property interests within the Borough by Councillors, either as owner or tenant?</p> <p><i>Ms Teresa Killick</i></p>	
5.	<p>In the light of the proposed cuts to early years funding within the Borough, what is Barnet's future commitment to funding its children's centres?</p> <p>Ms Jenny Borst</p>	