

**FINCHLEY & GOLDERS GREEN RESIDENTS FORUM
ACTION SHEET**

23 November 2010

Held at St Michael's Church Hall, The Riding, Off Golders Green Road, Golders Green, NW11

*Chairman: Councillor Dean Cohen
*Vice-Chairman: Councillor Graham Old
*denotes Councillor present

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
1 (a)	<p>Petition – Opposition to removal of the Oak trees in Erskine Hill, NW11</p> <p>The lead petitioner was unhappy that the Oak trees were threatened with removal as the Council had policies that protected trees. There was also concerned that the consultation was flawed as a non-response would be treated as an acceptance of the plans. The petition showed that local residents were unhappy with the proposal to remove the Oak trees. It was felt that the Council were being too hasty in trying to remove the trees as they had a good life expectancy and were environmentally friendly and contributed to the carbon footprint.</p>	<p>The Council was 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 were 11 Oak trees, of which 3 had been identified in subsidence cases and required removal. A further tree was also implicated in a case and the site investigation data was awaited.</p> <p>Subsequently 3 or 4 trees would need to be removed, leaving a minimum of 7. The current treatment for maintaining these trees was proving ineffective and the remaining 7 would 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 could be a better option. It should be noted that the trees had a life expectancy of 10/20 years.</p> <p>Ward Members and residents were 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>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
(b)	Why were the Council using its resources to remove trees during the current economic climate?	<p>No decisions had been made on the course of treatment to be taken, and the views of residents were simply to be collated at this time. The outcome of this would then determine any future course of action.</p> <p>The Council were looking at alleviating the source of subsidence problems in the area that had cost the Council through its insurers £650,000 through 29 cases of subsidence. As 3 or 4 needed to be removed it was decided to consult on removing the remaining 7 trees that need constant lopping.</p>	
(c)	Who had been consulted and what was their response?	<p>The Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Group, Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association and Ward Members had been consulted and agreed that the removal could occur.</p> <p>Jenny Warren, Greenspaces Service Manager</p>	
(d)	Prior to consultation, shouldn't Committee approval been sought to consult?	<p>Within the decision-making process prior approval for officers to consult residents on a proposal was not required.</p>	
(e)	Where would the final decision be made?	<p>The final decision could be made at a future meeting of the Finchley & Golders Green Area Environment Sub-Committee. The lead petitioner would be notified should recommendations be reported for approval by Committee.</p> <p>Jeff Lustig, Director of Corporate Governance</p>	
2 (a)	Although I had now received a written reply in regard to questions asked at the last Forum about the Council's consultation process, one of the questions, on the subject of the 'Ideas Barnet' website, had apparently been misunderstood. My question was about the integrity, rather than the 'integration', of the ideas submitted.	<p>Both residents and staff who were residents of Barnet had been encouraged to submit their ideas to the website. 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.</p> <p>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>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
	<p>It was widely believed that a large number of the ideas included on this site were 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 e-mail addresses, post codes etc, as being from individuals with no connection to the Council?</p>	<p>To ensure confidentiality the ideas were anonymous and the website does not allow the Council to correlate ideas that had been posted to names and e-mail addresses that had been submitted.</p> <p>The Council had done this was that to ensure the lowest possible barrier of entry to posting ideas on the site. Also, it was wanted to encourage people to submit ideas within the limits of acceptability that were set around the Council's moderation policy and this had therefore encouraged many ideas about controversial subjects that people may not had felt able to contribute if we had publicly displayed their name and e-mail address.</p> <p>The Council allowed people to record their name and e-mail address in the ideas submission form so they could be optionally e-mailed at the end of the process to explain what had happened as a result of it.</p> <p>The Ideas website was an innovative way for the Council to engage with its residents, not only allowing residents to feedback their views and ideas to the Council, but allowing the Council 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 would welcome input on how it might be developed further.</p> <p>Lastly, the Council would like to assure its residents that the Council and its staff (many whom are residents) main objective was to ensure Barnet was a good place to live and continue provide quality services to residents.</p> <p>It was these engagement activities which allow the Council to understand its resident's views in-depth in order to make improvements and it would be a shame not to continue using the Idea Website.</p>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
(b)	Why was the Ideas website being used for consulting residents on ideas for saving the Council money?	The Council were trying to promote different forms of engagement with its residents including innovative forms of communications. The Council were trying to open on its consultation processes to as many as possible with few barriers.	
(c)	Why were Council staff being consulted for ideas for saving money for the Council?	Some Council staff lived in the Borough and were entitled to a view on saving money for the Council. The resident's view that Council staff should not be consulted on these types of consultation would be considered by the consultation team and its processes. Rosie Evangelou, Consultation and Insight Officer Chris Palmer, Assistant Director, Communications	
3 (a)	There had 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 were therefore not completed. This might imply that the project was in fact better described as a 'bad news story'. Why was the project running behind schedule, and when would the work be satisfactorily completed?	The Street Lighting replacement programme covers 70% of the roads in the Borough and therefore was a very large undertaking. There were occasions when it was necessary to change the order of the programme due to circumstances outside of the control of the Council and the service provider. Where a road was not carried out in the original sequence it would be replaced with a road which was planned later in the programme. The Council expected the service provider to update the details of these changes on their website and this had not been carried out as diligently as would be hoped. This had been addressed with the service provider and they were currently updating their website and had attached a message to identify that this was in progress. The Council and its service provider apologise for any confusion due to the delays in updating the progress of the column replacement programme. It was expected that the programme would be completed by the end of this financial year as planned.	
(b)	Was the programme on track?	Yes. Paul Bragg, Highways Manager (Network Management, Environment and Operations)	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
4 (a)	<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 had always failed to identify a single site in the Borough suitable for accommodating the needs of such people. The London Borough of Barnet was 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 Council had 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>The issue had not been finalised. The provision for gypsies and travellers was still a matter for debate at a London-wide level. The issue would be discussed at the London Plan Examination in Public (EIP) on 7 December. Following the EIP a report would be submitted to the Mayor and he would move forward to adopt the London Plan in mid 2011. Barnet's Core Strategy was required to be in general conformity with the London Plan. The Council's strategy should therefore be consistent with the Mayor's as regards provision for gypsies and travellers. Nick Lynch, Planning Policy Manager</p>	
(b)	<p>Why were the Council positively discriminating against the gypsy/ traveller ethnic minority?</p>	<p>Over the years, the Council had looked throughout the Borough for suitable sites for the gypsy/ traveller community. There were a number of reports that had gone to the Executive and to various Committees both during the past 8 years and prior to that time. Reports were available and the resident would be sent details. Jeff Lustig, Director of Corporate Governance</p>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
5 (a)	<p>The register of Councillors' interests, gifts and hospitality had at last become available online, although seven members have been allowed to 'opt out' of what was 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 was stated on the register that it was 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'. Can you clarify the rules on the declaration of property interests within the Borough by Councillors, either as owner or tenant?</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>	
(b)	<p>Finally, the online declaration of Member's interests, gifts and hospitality was live. Why had some Members opted out of declaring their interests, gifts and hospitality online?</p>	<p>The site became live in mid-November, and Members were given a choice to publish online or not. However, all hard copies of the declarations were available for inspection by request through the Director of Corporate Governance.</p>	
(c)	<p>Why had some Member's not declared an address within the Borough on their declaration?</p>	<p>Members on the declaration form had to declare property interests within the Borough. These property interests had been submitted to and were published in the Register of Members Interests. Jeff Lustig, Director of Corporate Governance</p>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
6	<p>In the light of the proposed cuts to early years funding within the Borough, what was the Council's future commitment to funding its children's centres?</p>	<p>The Council had full funding for all 21 children's centres until the end of the current financial year (March 2011). These children's centres were paid for entirely out of the Government's "Sure Start" grants.</p> <p>The Council does not know the level of funding it would receive for the next financial year until around mid-December. This was normal. The Council would obviously develop plans for next year in the light of the money available to spend. The Council would then discuss these plans with parents, staff and partner agencies across the Borough. Changes, if any, to what the Council provides would be targeted to ensure that services and support were available for those parents/carers and children most in need of the Council's help.</p> <p>The Council was sending a letter to parents and carers that used the children's centres on 24 November to inform parents and carers of the Council's position following reports in the local press last week that children's centres were closing. Any decision on the future of any children's centre would be taken following a formal consultation process following the Government's announcement of Sure Start grant funding.</p> <p>Stav Yiannou, BRSI Divisional Manager (Children's Services)</p>	
7	<p>Were there any plans for the Council to collect energy saving light bulbs through the recycle collection?</p>	<p>Environment and Operations Directorate to respond.</p> <p>Nicola Cross, Waste Strategy</p>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
8	There was dissatisfaction at the level of service that residents had received from First Contact. Can the Council publish how the First Contact desk works and the service level that residents should expect?	The Director of Corporate Governance apologised to the resident concerned for the problems he had experienced and explained that the Council was working to improve the service that residents received when using First Contact. He said that he would pass on the request made by the resident for details of the First Contact service response times to be published online. Jeff Lustig, Director of Corporate Governance	
9	Can residents be involved in helping the Council clear litter?	The Council were currently considering the details of a scheme whereby the Council would enlist volunteers to adopt streets. This scheme could include litter picking. Jenny Warren, Greenspaces Service Manager	
Matters Arising from Action Sheet from 19 October 2010 Meeting			
I	Item 1 – traffic and pedestrian safety concerns in the area around Brookland School PC Mercer informed the Forum that, at the request of the Council, the Police had a zig-zag patrol outside the school during the week that commenced 15 November.	To note.	
II	Item 2 – Request for CPZ in vicinity of Sneath Avenue A resident enquired what response had Councillor Monroe Palmer received regarding experimental traffic orders.	Councillor Monroe Palmer had been advised that experimental traffic orders could only occur legally with suitable justification. Mervyn Bartlett, Traffic & Regeneration Manager	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
III	<p>Item 3 – Lack of delivery of Barnet First A residents asked whether the delivery service for Barnet First could be improved.</p>	<p>The Council had been informed by the contractor that the delivery programme was up-to-date. Residents who usually received a copy of Barnet First but had not received their copy should contact Chris Palmer, Assistant Director, Communications by either: e-mail: chris.palmer@barnet.gov.uk phone: 020 8359 7408. mail: Building 2, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP Chris Palmer, Assistant Director, Communications</p>	
IV	<p>Item 5 – West Finchley CPZ consultation (a) A resident enquired about the fact that the Sneath Avenue CPZ was going ahead. (b) A resident asked for the results of the West Finchley CPZ consultation. Another resident requested the information or otherwise a freedom of information request would be submitted.</p>	<p>The proposed scheme was being consulted upon. The proposal was only able to come forward through money being available through a development related legal agreement that permitted expenditure on such schemes in the area. The results were not complete and therefore the Council were unable to circulate them at this time. Further work was required that would not be envisaged in the foreseeable future. Mervyn Bartlett, Traffic & Regeneration Manager</p>	
V	<p>Item 12 – Forum publicity A resident asked whether there were plans to improve the publicity of the Forums.</p>	<p>Forums were advertised in The Press and notices were sent to resident groups and individuals who requested them. There were plans to promote the Forums through a more prominent means through the Council's website that was being revamped. Jeff Lustig, Director of Corporate Governance</p>	

	Issue Raised	Response	Action:
VI	<p>Item 13 – Dangerous manhole cover on a slope on the pavement on the corner of Golders Green Road and Armitage Road</p> <p>A resident requested that the manhole be moved as it was on a slope and was dangerous when slippery.</p>	<p>The manhole cover was level and in a safe condition. However, the relevant utility company had been requested to change the cover to a type that would be less susceptible to becoming slippery when wet.</p> <p>Mervyn Bartlett, Traffic & Regeneration Manager</p>	
VII	<p>Item 16 – Donoghues Skip Lorries on The Vale, NW11</p>		
(a)	<p>A resident was surprised that Donoghues mechanically swept the lower part of The Vale 3 times a week. The resident requested that Donoghues undertook a weekly Saturday sweep as there were less cars on the roads.</p>	<p>The Street Cleansing team would be notified of the request for a weekly Saturday sweep by Donoghues. The Street Cleansing team would also investigate the claims that a 3 times a week sweep had not taken place.</p> <p>Mervyn Bartlett, Transport & Regeneration Manager</p>	
(b)	<p>A resident enquired whether anything could be done regarding the speeding traffic on The Vale.</p>	<p>The Childs Hill Safer Neighbourhood Team would be informed of the speeding problem and it was hoped that a temporary speed sign could be erected that showed motorists the speed that they were travelling.</p> <p>PC Carl Mercer, Garden Suburb Safer Neighbourhood Team</p>	
<p>The next meeting of the Finchley & Golders Green Area Residents' Forum will take place at 6.30pm on Wednesday, 5 January 2010 at Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley, N3 3QE</p>			

The meeting which had started at 6.35pm ended at 7.50pm

Officers Present:

Jeff Lustig: Director of Corporate Governance
Mervyn Bartlett : Transport and Regeneration Manager
Karina Conway: Finchley and Golders Green Area Planning Manager
PC Carl Mercer: Garden Suburb Safer Neighbourhood Team
Jonathan Regal: Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Warren: Greenspaces Manager