

Decisions of the Environment and Climate Change Committee

14 March 2023

Members Present:-

Councillor Alan Schneiderman (Chair)

Councillor Geof Cooke (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joshua Conway
Councillor
Rishikesh Chakraborty
Councillor Paul Lemon
Councillor Simon Radford
Councillor Emma Whysall

Councillor Rohit Grover
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor Dean Cohen
Councillor Claire Farrier (Substitute for
Councillor Giulia Innocenti)

Also in attendance

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Giulia Innocenti

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr Innocenti, who was substituted by Cllr Farrier.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS

Cllr Grover introduced his Member's Item on Streetscape Design in Conservation Areas in Barnet. Cllr Grover requested that the importance of establishing in Barnet the principle of being mindful of streetscape design for conservation areas be minuted.

Mr Edser, Director of Highways noted that officers are working on developing local design codes, recognising unique characteristics, as part of their work with town centres. Officers would be looking at conservation areas next, building on knowledge from residents and Ward Members. A refresh of the design guidance would begin in 12-18 months' time to ensure that new developers are aware.

Cllr Grover asked about cross-disciplinary input into this, given that the service is returning in-house. Mr Edser responded that it is important that people have awareness of the unique nature of the borough and how to protect this. The principles are established with colleagues from street scene, town centre coordination, highways and planning.

Resolved that the Member's item was noted.

7. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairman introduced the report.

Cllr Lemon asked whether there had been progress on the KPIs for food hygiene inspections since Q3.

Mr Edser reported that the Group Manager had informed him that the backlog, which stemmed from the pandemic, should be concluded by the end of March 2023. An independent Food Standards Agency (FSA) assessment had shown the service to be doing well, with strengthening need in a small number of areas.

Cllr Longstaff asked how long Tarmac Kier would be given to improve. He added that on page 22 the report contained an error ('Kier Tarmac'). Mr Edser would get clarity from the Group Manager.

Action: Mr Edser

Mr Edser reported that an improvement plan for Tarmac Kier was included in the committee report. This included a refresh of the senior contract management and a renewed commitment to health and safety training. Management site audits would be carried out weekly with the Barnet Highways team. A review of utility strikes is also being undertaken, using incidents in the Borough as an example to carry out root cause analysis and look at ways to improve. A new system is being put in place to track the location of utilities.

Mr Edser reported that joint best practice workshops were being held with Tarmac Kier and Barnet, in which a range of actions had been set out in relation to an extended contract arrangement. A lot of work would be carried out around the Borough's road network.

Cllr Longstaff enquired whether potholes are routinely recorded or whether they are dealt with in response to residents or Councillors reporting them. Mr Edser responded that Barnet has 9 inspectors across 3 areas of the Borough at any one time, carrying out

cyclical inspections. In addition the team responds to ad hoc reports of potholes. Work was recorded through the asset management system.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

8. ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE FORECAST FINANCIAL OUTTURN MONTH 10 (JANUARY 2023)

Mr Ndenko Asong, Finance Manager, was invited to the table.

Cllr Cohen asked about the reason for the additional cost for waste collection services (page 2). Mr Craig Miller, Director, Streetscene noted that this refers to staffing costs which fluctuate throughout the year.

Cllr Cohen asked what the £2.317million shortfall for parking services refers to. Mr Miller responded that this is due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19. He added that in some areas there had been an increase in off-street parking, and in others the impact of the pandemic affected levels of travelling and parking.

Cllr Cohen requested a breakdown of the £2.317million. Mr Miller would provide an update following the meeting.

Action: Mr Miller

Cllr Longstaff asked about the CPZ Programme (page 26) and whether the report refers to those already consulted on and agreed by residents, or future CPZs. Mr Miller responded that this refers to those already taken through the E&CC Committee, which would go through consultation. Some had already been consulted on.

Cllr Cohen enquired whether a breakdown of PCNs could be provided. Mr Miller would provide this following the meeting.

Action: Mr Miller

Cllr Longstaff asked when the mortuary service overspend is likely to abate further to excess deaths during the pandemic. The Chair would follow up after the meeting.

Action: Governance Officer

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

9. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY UPDATE

Ms Yogita Popat, Assistant Director, Sustainability, introduced her report and updated on progress against the Barnet Net Zero Campaign since the previous meeting.

Ms Popat reported that the Adults' and Young People's Citizens' Assembly had met several times. Recommendations would be developed over the upcoming sessions.

Ms Popat added that officers were working on a pilot for a 'Library of Things' in the borough, as well as a decision-making tool for Net Zero to help review the impact of decisions on sustainability. This social enterprise would be embedded in a report to a future Cabinet meeting with a business case.

Ms Popat reported that Barnet had led a consortium bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with 11 other boroughs. If successful this funding would help Barnet to support small and medium enterprises to retrofit properties.

Cllr Cooke asked whether there would be a report to Cabinet on how Barnet could benefit from the 3CI Group. Ms Popat responded that Barnet is connected via the London Environment Directors Network which she and Mr Miller are members of. There would be a future report to Cabinet.

Cllr Grover asked whether it is possible to confirm the process for recommendations by the Citizens' Assembly before they are agreed. Ms Popat responded that the process would take from the end of March to April 2023. An impact analysis would be carried out following the Citizens' Assembly meeting in May. Then participants will be invited to choose their top ten recommendations, which would be brought to Cabinet for noting. Following this the recommendations would be discussed at a Partnership Group consisting of community groups and partners from across the Borough, which would be developed into an action plan.

The Chair moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations 1-6:

For – 7
Against – 0
Abstain - 4

RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.

10. TREE POLICY UPDATE AND PLANTING PROGRAMME

Mr Andy Tipping, Trees and Woodlands Manager, and Ms Cassie Bridger, Assistant Director, Greenspaces and Leisure, presented the report.

Ms Bridger reported that the Tree Policy had been refreshed taking into account emerging strategies and other corporate frameworks and ambitions around sustainability and climate change. Barnet's ambition is to plant 5000 trees over five years from 1st April 2023 to 2028.

Cllr Farrier asked whether 5000 should be a minimum target, and more could be planted. Mr Tipping responded that the government is keen to fund more tree planting and it depends on what is available, as well as constraints around planting in streets, but more could be planted potentially.

Cllr Farrier enquired on behalf of Cllr Innocenti, whether more hedges could be maintained and planted. Ms Bridger responded that this would be picked up within wider pieces of work such as sustainability and biodiversity.

Cllr Farrier asked on behalf of Cllr Innocenti how trees could be better maintained for example along the A41 and other major highways given that TfL plant them but don't always maintain them. Mr Tipping noted that it requires a full time workforce to water 2000 trees a week and although Barnet achieved tree planting via TfL last year there is not contract for them to be maintained, due to how TfL manages its contracts.

Cllr Cohen asked whether the issue of footway damage due to trees had been addressed. Mr Tipping reported that a Tree Root Policy had been consulted on and would be formalised in the near future. This also included working with the Network Recovery Programme and with new root deflector materials which could be used on new trees, but not existing ones.

Cllr Cohen asked what engagement there would be with residents, businesses and ward members on where trees would be planted. Mr Tipping responded that replacement trees will be planted in the same place. A 'tree equity' model had been created as part of the policy document, which concentrated on Cricklewood, Burnt Oak, Hendon, Colindale South and Friern Barnet for tree planting, but the team would continue to work with the community on this.

Cllr Cohen requested that ward members are provided with a list of locations where tree planting is planned to take place, so that any issues can be raised in advance. Ms Wakeling offered to discuss this with the team and respond following the meeting.

Action: Executive Director, Adults & Health

Cllr Conway enquired how successful the council has been in being awarded government grants. Ms Bridger responded that Section 1.12 of the report provides information on how far the team has been able to obtain external grant monies during the existing period of the planting programme, to a total of just over £400,000 over the past five years.

Cllr Cohen moved a motion to amend the recommendations – that ward Members receive an annual list of new tree locations prior to installation. The motion was seconded by Cllr Longstaff.

The Chair moved to a vote on the motion:

For - 3

Against - 7

Abstain - 1

The motion was lost.

The Chair moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations:

The recommendations were unanimously APPROVED.

11. EVENTS IN PARKS POLICY UPDATE

Ms Bridger presented her report.

Ms Bridger noted that the report outlines the new policy with an enhanced approach including a site suitability assessment process and liaison with stakeholders.

Cllr Radford asked whether there was a top threshold for the number of people attending as it was set at '1000 plus'. He noted that people are worried about large events in Oakhill Park for example and he asked who would be consulted on this.

Ms Bridger responded that a request for an event with over 500 people is subject to an assessment by the council's Safety Advisory Group and has involvement from a range of

agencies including blue light services, the Barnet emergency planning team, licensing team, streetscene and transport. Ms Bridger offered to share the methodology for working out the thresholds for numbers of attendees.

Action: Ms Bridger

Cllr Longstaff noted that it would be useful to have this as residents had contacted him concerned about numbers of people who can attend events. Buses, trains and parking needed to be taken into account.

Cllr Longstaff commented that virtually every event receives at least one noise complaint. Ms Bridger noted that the responsibilities of licensing, environmental health and other departments are set out in the report and officers do visit events.

Cllr Cooke noted that there is no park called 'Friern Park' as listed in Appendix B. Ms Bridger would respond to Cllr Cooke after the meeting.

Action: Ms Bridger

Cllr Chakraborty asked what opportunities there are for residents to provide input into what events take place in their local parks. Ms Bridger responded that the policy refers to the process of engagement via Friends of Parks and other stakeholders. Residents are encouraged to direct queries to the team via their ward Councillors, and event information can be shared with them.

The Chair moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations:

For – 7

Against – 4

Abstain – 0

RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.

12. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Ms Nicole, Asante, Senior Scientific Officer presented the report on the statutory 2023-28 Action Plan.

Ms Asante noted that there would be a public consultation imminently on all aspects of the plan, including the strategy, public health and transport.

Cllr Farrier enquired how indoor air quality is being addressed, particularly for schools. Ms Asante responded that work has been carried out in North Central London focusing on indoor air quality. The current action plan uses Greater London Authority recommended measures which focus more on outdoor air quality.

Mr Ralph Haynes, Group Manager, Environmental Health noted that work is also carried out on damp, mould and fires. Some additional work would be carried out around schools in relation to boilers and insulation. The highways team is looking at putting in 'school streets' for eligible schools across the whole of Barnet.

Ms Popat noted that the action plan contains a lot of detail on the anti-idling campaign, and air quality audits are being carried out. The council has a list of the most polluted schools in Barnet. Work would be undertaken to change to more renewable heat

sources, and also to reduce congestion. The audits would be used as evidence when applying for grants.

Cllr Cooke asked whether the council is planning to absorb pollution and encouraging switch to electric vehicles by providing charging points.

Ms Asange noted that reports are produced annually on the green infrastructure. The action plans contain details on electric vehicles, and as part of planning development efforts were being made to encourage the use of vehicle clubs.

Cllr Longstaff asked how a borough-wide smoke control zone would be enforced. Mr Haynes responded that this had been monitored over many decades and the equipment checks for non-approved smoke.

The Chair moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations:

RESOLVED that the recommendations were unanimously approved.

13. DAMAGE TO HIGHWAYS BY THIRD PARTIES

Mr Edser presented his report to the committee.

Cllr Cohen expressed thanks to Ms Jackie Staples, Member Liaison Officer and Mr Edser for their work on this matter.

The Chair moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations.

RESOLVED that the recommendations were unanimously approved.

14. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Resolved that the work programme was noted.

15. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

Cllr Cooke thanked the Chair for his work on the committee, which had driven a lot of change.

The Chair thanked all Members and officers for their work.

The meeting finished at 9.18 pm