

## Decisions of the Public Realm Forum

25 September 2019

Members Present:-

Interim Assistant Director  
Transportation and Highways  
Commissioning (Chairman)

Councillor Tim Roberts

Also in attendance

Commissioning Lead Environment  
Design and Heritage Manager

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Rohit Grover

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed those present to the fifth meeting of the Public Realm Forum.

### 2. KEY AREAS OF WORK OF THE FORUM TO DATE

The Chairman introduced the item and the intentions of the discussion.

The Commissioning Lead Environment provided a presentation on the key areas of work that the forum have been involved in to date. Key areas of input included;

- Decluttering the Public Realm:

The Forum identified an issue of redundant street furniture creating an element of cluttering in some areas. Therefore, an initiative of the Forum was to progress with decluttering the Public Realm. The Chairman on the forum agreed that de-cluttering requests would be managed through the Highways Direct Labour Organisation Members Footway Improvement Service. Communications informing Councillors of the request from the Public Realm Forum and details of the service were released.

A number of redundant items of street furniture have been removed, however it is worth noting that whilst some items of street furniture may appear unnecessary, they are sometimes performing an important function and therefore not all seemingly redundant items of street furniture are in fact redundant after further investigation.

- Guidance in town centre signage:

The forum has discussed and advised on the Borough / Town Centre signage design considerations such as identity, branding and sponsorship which should be taken into account by officers as part of the project. For example, discussions have been had regarding the uniformity of signage vs celebrating the differences between town centres.

- Input to the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy:

The Public Realm Forum have been informed of the progress in developing the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy and have provided input and guidance. For example, the

forum noted there have been some projects in the area which have been popular with residents and improved the public realm such as the tree planting.

The Golders Green Town Centre Strategy consultation closes on 8th October –forum attendees are encouraged to complete the consultation.  
<https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/golders-green-town-centre-strategy>

- Advising on the development Electric Vehicle Charging Points:

The Council are installing both free standing units and lamp post charging units for electric vehicles in the borough. With increasing requests from residents for the introduction of electric vehicle charging points the forum discussed how electric charging points can work in Barnet including the preferred type of charger and locations. In addition, the Forum has reviewed how other organisations such as The National Trust have installed electric charging points on their properties of important historical significance and will be looking at other examples best practice for the installation of electric charging points.

### **3. HOW DO WE GET THINGS DONE IN THE FUTURE**

The Chairman noted that the Public Realm Forum has been in place for almost 3 years (since December 2017) and the forum has met on five occasions. Although some useful discussions and input has been provided, as noted in item 1 above, it is time to review whether the Public Realm Forum should continue or come to an end.

The aim of the forum is to understand best practice in the context of finite resources for the public realm and to understand the cost benefit of a pallet of materials for conservation areas. However, the forum is not a decision making body and does not have access to funding / a budget.

There are many initiatives that members of the Public Ream Forum would like to take place or be involved in however as the forum is not decision making and does not have a budget / access to funding the work is limited and we have to select priorities in line with our finite resource profile. As a result, some attendees of the forum have felt that progress is not being made and that items being discussed at the forum are not what they originally wanted or intended to discuss.

Considering the points above the Chairman suggested that the Public Realm Forum is concluded and attendees are encouraged to input into issues and decisions via existing means. Specifically, via Area Committees, the work of Town Teams and specific Project / Area based consultations and engagements (such as the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy consultation).

The attendees of the forum discussed their views and suggested that the forum had become more of a ‘talking shop’ and that the time, experience and effort of attendees could be best used in other ways.

Councillor Roberts requested that the Chairman meet with Councillor Grover and Phillip Davies as key members of the forum and as Councillor Grover had originally put forward the motion for establishing ‘a Public Realm Management Forum for Barnet’ to Full Council on 31 January 2017. The Chairman agreed to meet with Councillor Grover and Phillip Davies and to provide an update to the forum.

### **4. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

## POST MEETING

The Chairman meet with Councillor Grover and Phillip Davies separately to discuss the future of the Public Realm Forum. Agreement was established to cease the Public Realm Forum and for Phillip Davies and other attendees to engage and provide guidance via Area Committees, the work of Town Teams and specific Project / Area based consultations and engagements.

Phillip Davies agreed that his report on 'Managing the Public Realm in Barnet,' which contains a resume of best practice, which should help to guide decision making and day to day maintenance work could be circulated widely within the Council to councillors, highways staff and contractors.

In addition, the Chair and vice Chair of the Environment Committee agreed with the approach taken and decision outlined above.