

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 22 January 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD - Islington Town Hall on 22 January 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Champion (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Clarke, Hamitouche, Jeapes, Nathan and Russell

Councillor Rowena Champion in the Chair

248 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Clarke-Perry.

249 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

There were no declarations of substitute members.

250 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

251 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

With regard to an update on the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager informed Members that document is still being drafted and will be sent to the Executive Member for Environment and Transport for consideration in due course.

The Chair informed Members that updates regarding the ethnicity of children participating in the summer reading challenge; the breakdown of sickness data of Islington's working age group and the number of apprentices supported into fulltime employment would be provided by the next meeting.

Members were informed that officers' responses to Members' questions, which have already been received and sent round, were being collated by the committee clerk.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

252 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 5)

The Chair indicated that she would be circulating her report by email to members and reminded members of a forthcoming visit to the Reuse and Recycling site at Cottage Road on Friday 8 March 2019.

253 ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item 6)

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

254 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**

There was none.

255 **SCRUTINY REVIEW - PARKS EVENT APPLICATION PROCESS (Item B1)**

A representative of the Friends of Park Forum, Jenni Chan, who is the secretary, and Barry Edwards, the Chair of the Friends of Paradise Park, spoke about the involvement of volunteers and about the activities held in parks and open spaces in Islington including the various challenges experienced. They made the following points -

- In 2010, with the assistance of the Greenspace Team, the Friends of the Park Forum (an umbrella organisation) was set up for Friends groups across the borough. It met twice a month to exchange ideas, information and expertise.
- Friends of Paradise Park came into existence to address antisocial behaviour within the park and, following discussions with the Greenspace team and residents, a decision was taken to take control over the management of the park.
- Since its inception, Friends of Paradise Park (FPP) has facilitated community events which has attracted new families with children into the park with the result that anti-social activities has been diverted away.
- FPP promotes and facilitates events with the aim of encouraging local residents to use the parks especially in the summer weekends. FPP has a Service Level Agreement with the Council. It relies on volunteers, some with gardening experience, to carry out routine maintenance tasks such as weeding, planting small plants, litter picking and tidying up.
- The meeting was advised that FPP organises weekly activities and holds a monthly meeting in the community centre to discuss a range of issues and programmes, often with Greenspace officers in attendance. Members were informed that while some friends groups are an off shoot of their Tenant Resident Associations, Friends of Paradise Park consists of a small group of local residents.
- In response to questions about information sharing among Forum members, Barry Edwards advised that issues about gardening and planting are discussed. Friends' groups promote their events, share ideas and experiences, and if required the forum could be used as place to undertake consultation by the Greenspace team.
- With regards to provision of compost to groups, there had previously been the option of a large delivery from NLWA which was very welcome. However due to policy changes from NLWA, this may no longer be an option. Also storage can be a nuisance to adjacent residential properties.
- In terms of resident engagement, promotion and publicity of events, the meeting was informed that events are crucial to encourage residents to go into the parks. Groups advertise their events differently. The simplest method is posters on park railings. With larger community events held in the summer, publicity is often done via leafletting by volunteers, the use of social media and the administrative support from Park Services.
- On the issue raised at a recent Friends Forum meeting of some friends group not being aware of initiatives such as the Mayor of London's tree planting or free bulbs,

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the Chair noted that information sharing was an issue in this area. It would be helpful if this could be improved as currently groups are missing out.

- Barry Edwards acknowledged that the Service Level Agreement it had with the Council was valuable as it enables the group to manage Paradise Park. In addition, FPP supplements its income with additional funds including those received from local businesses and Arsenal to enable it to put on events. The meeting was advised funds are used to purchase seedlings and plants, however in cases of facilitating larger events, the cost is shared with Greenspace.
- On the issue of fundraising, groups such as FFP are run by a small number of volunteers who find it challenging to complete bid application forms that request a lot of information.

The Chair thanked Barry Edwards and Jenny Chan for sharing their experiences and invited both Lisa Gani and Jerry Gutwin, Events Officer and Park Services Manager to address the Committee on the activities of the Events Team, the application process and challenges. The following points were highlighted:

- Events held in Islington Parks had been managed by the Green Space Admin staff, however as the number of event applications continued to increase over the years and because of health and safety regulations, this task was transferred to the Community Engagement Officers.
- In 2015 the Event applications process went online, with a dedicated events team managing over 200 annual events held in the parks.
- Members were reminded that the council has a duty of care to all park users hence the need to understand and manage what is going on in the parks and to ensure that the events are safe and appropriate.
- The Officer explained the application process involves the applicant completing an event questionnaire and providing evidence including a risk assessment. Officers then consult with other in-house departments for advice and approval.
- Council officers explained that where licenses or permits are required especially with food and drinks being sold, amplified music being played or the size of the stalls or gazebos being erected, it is imperative that other departments are consulted and their recommendation accepted as they have the expertise.
- In response to a question, the Events Officer advised that events which are deemed to have any risk will be required to submit evidence of public liability insurance.
- The meeting was informed that events with more than 50 people in attendance, those with catering, involving performances, showing a film, using gas BBQ require an application. Smaller events such as picnics, history or nature walks, professional dog walking and charcoal BBQ do not require an application.
- In terms of the time taken to complete an application, officer advised that larger events of 1,000 or more would take at least 90 days to process while small to medium events, between 30-45 days.

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- The application is made through EventApp. All the supporting documents are uploaded through the app.
- Meeting was advised that EventApp automatically creates an event calendar to avoid clashes and to assist other teams impacted by park events. The app is used to communicate with the event organiser throughout the process on issues such as fees and consultation with the various teams and it issues the event permit. As each action is logged there is an audit trail.
- Members were advised that despite the initial teething issues it is a lot more efficient in comparison to the previous booking system. Delays in some instances could arise especially if the application is dependent on other sections like licensing where their timescales are not always in line with the Parks Service.
- Members were advised that delays can arise as not every Council departments engages with EventApp and in some cases departments regard park events as low priority in relation to their day to day responsibilities. IT can cause delays as sometimes it doesn't always work efficiently and the level of support received from Digital Services is inconsistent.
- With regards to challenges experienced by applicants, officers advised that as the EventApp is web-based, some applicants find the system difficult to work with and some applicants are initially unaware of the amount of time and effort required to get approval for an event. Changes in regulations can cause delays especially when it results in a further request for additional licenses or certification and incurs extra costs. Officer support to help applicants can fluctuate due to capacity.
- Despite the challenges highlighted above, the Team continues to offer support and advice through the application process. In addition Greenspace advocates on behalf of applicants with other teams such where a Temporary Structure License may be required for the use of gazebos.
- Officers continue to work with Apply4, the developers of EventApp to improve the applicant's journey. Officers from different teams are invited to review the whole process.
- With regard to waste management issues in parks, members were advised that applicants are encouraged to put on sustainable events. Where it is a big event, applicants are encouraged to liaise with the Council's commercial waste team and promote recycling by ensuring that containers are in position
- Members were advised that the App is used by many London boroughs and with regard to the suggestion that the App could be internalised and used by other Council services, the meeting was advised that the system was built to deal with events in parks (and film applications) so it is unlikely other teams in the Council will utilise it.
- The meeting was advised that there has been an increase in event applications processed through the App since it's launch.
- Members were advised that the App serve as a 'one stop shop' and applicants who carry out regular events would only be required to upload documents once.

- Members were advised that Safety Advisory meetings are held with applicants especially if the event is likely to have a significant impact on the site or surrounding area.
- In response to some concerns that the process was about gathering more information and was too complicated, the officer advised that the essence of the whole application process was concern for public safety.
- In terms of increasing the capacity of park activities, the meeting was advised that this requires a balance between raising income and ensuring that the events do not impact on the amenity of the residents and park users.
- Members were advised that demand for commercial events is increasing. Event Officers will ask event organisers to incorporate things which benefits the local community into their activities, such as inviting local groups to participate or enjoy activities, or donating to the Mayor's charity.

The Chair thanked Officers for their presentation.

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QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT
(Item B2)

Councillor Webbe, Executive Member for Environment & Transport presented the Q2 Performance Report which set out the corporate performance indicators related to Environment and Transport.

- The meeting was informed that most of the measures were positive in terms of targets being met with the exception of household recycling rates and the fall in the number of leisure visits. With regards to the quarterly recycling rate slippage to 28.6% from the 29.5% reported in 2017/18, the Executive Member for Environment and Transport reiterated that industry tolerances had become tighter hence the increase in tonnage rejected as contaminated.
- In response to concerns about the annual slippage on the recycling rates, the Executive Member informed the meeting that the Service will be producing a new Waste Minimisation and Recycling Plan and is working with both the London Waste Reduction Board and the NLWA.
- On the issue of consultation on the Waste Action Plan, the Executive Member said that although the guidance does not stipulate community engagement, it is good practice for councillors to be given the opportunity to contribute before it is finally approved in the autumn months.
- Members were reminded that although annually the Council's Waste Action and Recycling plan is reported to Executive, this plan will be incorporated into the new Rescue Plan which the Mayor of London has requested, especially as it has a new set of criteria. The Executive Member agreed that committee will be kept informed and requested that the Waste Action plan be circulated to members.
- In response to a question on how the Council measures the success of the Council's fuel poverty initiative, SHINE, the Executive Member for Environment and Transport reiterated that the scheme is about interventions which has resulted in positive outcomes for residents. A suggestion that the SHINE team be invited to committee

to give a presentation was noted.

- With regards to raising the profile and promoting the success of Islington Bloom and its award ceremonies, and especially in recognition of the magnificent work of volunteers, the Park and Open Spaces Manager informed Members that the competition and the awards are publicised via social media, Islington Life magazine and Homes and Communities. There are plans for a strategy to be produced to increase coverage which will be shared with members in due course.
- On the timeline with regards to the Council's Transport strategy and public consultation, the meeting was advised that councillors and the public will have the opportunity to contribute to the strategy after March with the intention to have it signed off in September. In response to inaccurate information on the Council website relating to the Strategy, the meeting was advised that this would be looked into and corrected.
- In response to a question on reasons for the fall in fly-tipping figures compared to the previous year, the Park and Open Spaces Manager reminded members that there was an issue with the waste data however the fault with the IT software has now been resolved.
- With regard to the question of whether there were any recurring issue following the implementation of the street cleansing regime, the initial teething problems which related to the logistics around the refuse vehicles have been resolved. The new regime has resulted in cleaner streets. Members were informed that this change has resulted in Islington Council being nominated for an award for its innovation on street cleansing by Keep Britain Tidy.
- The Chair reminded Members to email the committee clerk if they had any questions on the report.

257 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19 (Item B3)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

CHAIR