

London Borough of Islington

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 9 March 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 9 March 2017 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Court (Chair), Poyser (Vice-Chair), Andrews, Hamitouche, Heather, Jeapes and Russell

Councillor James Court in the Chair

100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

None Received.

101 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None

102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

Councillor Dave Poyser declared a personal interest with regard to Item B7, Regeneration of Retail Areas as he is presently a member of the Archway Town Centre Group.

103 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

104 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 5)

A member of the public requested an update following a meeting between Environmental officers and the contractors regarding fly tipping around Wedmore Gardens.

The Executive Member for Environment & Transport advised that the Council continues to work with various agencies in addressing anti-social issues such as fly tipping wherever it occurs irrespective of whether it is on council or private owned land and to treat the issue of fly tipping very seriously.

The Chair informed the resident that an update on the outcome of the earlier meeting that had occurred in the day would be communicated to her.

105 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 6)

None

106 **REGENERATION OF RETAIL AREAS SCRUTINY REVIEW - WITNESS EVIDENCE - VERBAL (Item 7)**

The Chair invited David Fordham, Service Manager, Service Trading Standards, Jan Tucker, Chair of Archway Traders Association and Christine Lovett, CEO of Angel's Business Improvement Bid (BID) to address the Committee on their experiences, challenges and future prospects within the retail areas in Islington.

During consideration of this item the following points were raised -

- Members were informed about the draft street trading strategy which lists key things the Council aims to achieve in the next 5 years
- Members were advised that the value of revitalising and keeping the markets alive, providing local jobs for local people and meeting environmental sustainable objectives was the stimulus for action
- That the strategy aims to create a dynamic street trading and market experience suitable for residents and businesses
- Members agreed that as shopping habits of members of the public had changed over the years, street markets would have to adapt to this new trend.
- There are a number of challenges facing Street Trading and include lack of infrastructure regarding the removal of waste, parking issues on market site attracting new traders and retaining the existing traders.
- Members were advised that the Council aims to raise the profile of street markets and would be promoting street markets in the Time Out Magazine in May 2017 called 'love your market'
- A recognition that street markets still had a vital place within the community not only with the residents but businesses in its vicinity so the regeneration of the market was essential to provide future opportunities.
- Members were informed that street markets would be encouraged to introduce different themes on market days as it was noticeable that the existence of farmers markets had resulted in increase in trading and footfall especially visitors
- Members were advised that most authorities in the country were experiencing similar issues on managing street markets and that the decline of traditional street markets was due to a number of factors such as competition from other forms of retail, lack of investment or vision by the local authorities and changing demographics .
- A Member enquired if the loss of vibrancy of street markets was due to the prevalence of food stalls competing with the shops especially as businesses pay rates and charges. The Service Manager, Service Trading Standards advised that it had not been raised as an issue, however the Council be looking at ways of

assisting or supporting such businesses

- With regards to the cost of hiring stalls and pitches and the revenue derived by the Council, the Service Manager, Service Trading Standards advised that Council charges £60 per week, the lowest in comparison to other neighbouring authorities and cheaper than markets that are located on private land. On the issue of revenue, Members were advised that any revenues received would be ring fenced.
- A Member enquired whether the Council offered support such as mentoring/training for new stall holders with a view to helping the stall holders move into retail shops .
- A Member enquired if Officers were aware of a financial incentive being offered to stall holders in Crystal Palace where they were being charged a percentage of their daily takings. The Service Manager, Service Trading Standards Street indicated that he would look into this payment scheme, but reminded Members that LBI charges were presently the lowest in comparison to other authorities.
- Christian Lovett welcomed the Council's strategic approach to street trading, stating that the success of the farmer's market in Chapel Street was due to the difficult and bold decisions taken by the Council and such difficult decision should continue to be applied to parking concerns around the markets.
- Jan Tucker highlighted the parking issues around the Archway square especially with the relocation of Archway market. Jan Tucker indicated that business was picking up in the private market and it was noticeable that shops were flourishing. She also suggested that Markets should be encouraged to introduce theme days such as Antique and Craft activities within the markets, activities that have resulted in an increase of foot fall in the market.
- The Council should continue taking difficult decisions on issues such as business rates, employment opportunities for Islington residents and parking challenges in and around the market without impacting the traditional nature of the street markets. Christian Lovell welcomed regenerating retail areas but it was important that well known markets such as Chapel Market not lose its original identity. Reference was made to neighbouring markets such as in Camden Lock where most of the stalls are now privately owned and although regarded as successful, the view was expressed that it had lost its traditional nature.
- A Member suggested that consideration should be given to businesses such as One pound shops and Charity shops taking up empty spaces as these businesses do attract people into the area.
- The Executive Member for Economic Development noted that in defining the purpose of growth, it was important to ensure that whatever changes are introduced that it benefits everyone, resident and businesses in the neighbourhood. She also advised that private markets results in money out flow of the borough as most of the stall holders were not residents
- A Member suggested that in situations where there were empty spaces above shops, consideration should be given to using the rooms for culture or exhibition events. Also she noted that in terms of regenerating the retail areas, Officers should look into tapping into some of the healthy scheme initiatives promoted by the Office

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of the Mayor of London on walking, cycling and supporting less traffic. Also Healthy Street Schemes was mentioned with funds for provision of street benches.

- A Member added that markets were vital to the local community as it brings people into the area and that the relationship between shops and street market traders are symbiotic. He also noted that without parking spaces street markets would struggle.
- In response to parking concerns the Service Manager Street/ Trading Standards acknowledged that parking was an issue around markets however the council was involved in a project looking at the issue and would provide an update to the Committee in the next month.

It was RESOLVED that

1. The Service Director Planning and Development circulate to Members of the Committee documents relating to the Healthy Street Scheme.

The Chair thanked David Fordham, Jan Tucker and Christine Lovett for attending.

107 **BRIDGE WORKS ON HOLLOWAY ROAD (Item 8)**

Nick Fairholme, TFL Director of Programmes was present and was accompanied by Daniel Hall, Project Manager TFL and provided a verbal update to the Committee during which the following main points were made-

- Nick Fairholme apologised to residents and businesses for the disruption to their daily lives as a result of the unplanned works on the Holloway Bridge Work on the A1. In explaining the causes for the work, Nick Fairholme reminded Members that works on the bridge was necessary as the bridge had reached the end of its operational life and that the delay and subsequent closure of long sections of the Holloway Road was done in consultation with Islington Council and Highways Officers simply to allow demolition to be carried out during the Christmas period when traffic would be lighter.
- Ascertaining the ownership of the deep seated cables under the road surface owned by gas, electricity, water and telecommunication companies was very challenging as in most cases they had been laid underground for decades.
- Nick Fairholme acknowledged that as a result of the disruption especially over the October half term break in 2016, TFL did issue over 500 letters and emails to residents and businesses explaining the situation and staff were deployed to respond to enquiries from residents and businesses in the affected area on Holloway Road. In addition he also stated that TFL would respond at short notice especially when sudden incidents occurred for example making available shuttle buses.
- The Director confirmed that he was delighted to announce that despite the disruption, the unplanned works to the Bridge was completed on schedule with all the roads opened by 16 January 2017 and traffic restrictions lifted.
- Members were advised that although engineering works are complex in nature, most of the challenges are not noticeable until when work commences however lessons

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learnt from this experience would be shared when TFL engages in other projects.

- Nick Fairholme advised the Committee that a number of options had been considered with regards to the closure of the A1 road and the decision was not taken lightly and the overriding issue in this instance was safety.
- Lessons learnt from the experiences on the Holloway Bridge project include improving the engagement and consultation process with residents and businesses by using social media forums to communicate not only prior to the commencement of the project but throughout the duration of the project. Also better collaboration between contractor and utility companies should be encouraged especially where there are over 15 different utility companies involved.
- With regards to identifying ownership of underground utility cables especially in the future, Members were advised that utilities are now mapped and there are now electronic records available which identifies not only the exact location but the actual depths of the cables underground.
- The meeting was advised that Upper Holloway would have a number of utility cables but these were not as complex as those that were found on the Bridge works at Holloway Road.
- A Member wanted TFL to consider the impact of the works around Highbury Corner on passenger safety using the Highbury & Islington station especially on Arsenal match days as this would result in an increase in footfall in and around the area.
- Nick Fairholme advised that works on the Highbury Corner would involve demolition of the bridge which would result in vehicular diversions in and around the area. The meeting was advised that TFL has plans to carry out works around the Christmas break so as to minimise disruption and that the works will be carried out in phases.
- The first phase which involved the partial demolition of the bridge was carried out in summer 2016 with the next phase commencing between April to June 2017 on the carriageway and the final major work which involve the closure of roads around Highbury Corner would commence around Christmas.
- Members requested that both local businesses and residents be kept abreast of the works schedule around Highbury Corner. Nick Fairholme agreed that communication was vital however it was important to manage public expectation as too much information provided too early in the scheme could easily be forgotten however TFL would endeavour to keep all affected updated.
- In response to a question on whether TFL had the ability to manage the Highbury Corner works following its experience on Holloway Road, Nick Fairholme assured Members that TFL had a good track record of delivery such as the Hammersmith Bridge project were completed on time .
- A Member indicated that there is a public perception that TFL's primary focus centres around buses and their routes instead of those residents that are directly affected with the ongoing works as they have no form of involvement or contribution prior to and during the works. It was suggested that TFL should facilitate on site meetings with local people being invited to feed into the work programme.

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- In response to a question about the delay on the Gospel oak to Barking Line, Nick Fairholme advised that he was not directly involved and not aware of the present situation.
- Nick Fairholme agreed to update the Committee at a future meeting on the progress of works, the timeline for works around Highbury Corner and the proposed bus diversion routes when information is available.
- The Executive Member for Environment & Transport informed Members that the Council had been engaged throughout the period of disruption on Holloway Road, and that she had attended the public meeting between TFL and the public which had provided an opportunity for TFL to listen to residents concern. She also stated that having undertaken a site visit she saw the full extent of the issues and its complexity.

Members welcomed the news that no complaints were received from residents or businesses of any loss to the service provided by any of the utilities.

The chair thanked Nick Fairholme and Daniel Hall for attending.

It was RESOLVED that

1. The TFL Director of Programmes provide details to the Committee on the engineering works around Highbury Corner and in particular the proposed bus diversion routes that will put in place.

108 WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17 (Item 9)

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

CHAIR