

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 2023, 7:00PM – 9:10PM

PRESENT:

Councillors: Matt White (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice Chair), Alexandra Worrell, Makbule Gunes, Michelle Simmons-Safo.

ATTENDING VIRTUALLY:

Lourdes Keever

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item one on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Yvonne Denny.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of Interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

There were no deputations, petitions, presentations, or questions.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 12th October 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels were noted and approved, and any recommendations contained within were approved:

8. LEISURE SERVICES UPDATE

The Panel received a report which provided a summary of the current position regarding the provision of leisure management within Haringey and the steps being taken to enhance that provision.

Before the report was introduced, the Chair advised the following:

Cabinet is due to consider a decision on Leisure Management at their meeting on Tuesday 5th of December and the papers for the Cabinet meeting are being published later this evening.

In accordance with the scrutiny procedure rules and access to information rules, we will continue to consider the report at hand and raise questions/ issues/ concerns on the information in this report. Please can it be noted that the contents of the Cabinet report will not be referred to in responses as the report is deemed an officer report with recommendations and no decision has been made by cabinet on this report.

Advice has been provided by Democratic services, supported by Legal services, that this is the appropriate way forward as Scrutiny are considering the report in line with Constitution provision at part 4 section G and paragraph 9.1, following the OSC meeting in July. This is not a pre-call in and also not a policy review contained in the work programme to allow the report to be shared with Scrutiny and discussed at a public meeting prior to consideration by Cabinet.

In view of this being a key service area which has been of considerable concern to us as a Committee, I have agreed with Democratic services that the Committee officer will take a close note of the matters raised in the discussion and I will review these notes and compare to the content of the Cabinet report and then further attend Cabinet to raise any outstanding issues /concerns from this committee meeting not addressed in the report.

The report was introduced by Cllr Emily Arkell, Cabinet Member for Culture Communities and Leisure. Also present for this item were Mark Stevens, AD for Direct Services & Simon Farrow, Head of parks and Leisure. Cllr Arkell introduced the report as set out in the agenda pack at pages 51 to 57. The following arose in discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel outlined the degree of frustration felt by the local community in the amount of time that the swimming pool at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre had been closed. A member of the Panel commented that there were a large number of marginalised residents in and around Seven Sisters and that its closure had a disproportionate impact on a range of different groups. Of particular concerns was children with autism, as swimming was a vital lifesaving skill. The Panel member sought assurances around when the pool would be open. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged the

frustrations felt by residents and advised that the Council had offered residents the option of using Park Road leisure centre in Hornsey, but it was understood that this was not an option for everyone. Residents were also able to use Fusion managed pool facilities in other boroughs. The Cabinet Member set out that there was a 12 month period, following the Cabinet decision next week, to ensure that future provision was as good as it could be. The Panel were advised that it was envisaged that the pool at Tottenham Green would be open in the new year. The reason it had taken so long was because of the difficulties in identifying what the problem was and then rectifying it.

- b. The Panel expressed a level of frustration with the fact that they were unable to scrutinise the decision being taken by Cabinet next week and requested that a subsequent update be brought to a future meeting. **(Action: Clerk).**
- c. The Chair sought assurances around the ability of residents to have democratic oversight on how future leisure services were provided. The Chair also commented that it was important that Councillors were allowed to scrutinise the decision being made, and that he did not want to see a repeat of the situation whereby, even the recommendations of the Cabinet report were exempt for reasons of commercial confidentiality. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged these concerns and provided assurances that the service had been examining what other boroughs were doing and how democratic accountability can be a part of any future service provision. Officers reiterated that they agreed that this was an important consideration going forwards, and gave assurances that, subject to which of the five options Cabinet approved, that it would form part of the future service offer.
- d. The Panel commented that primary schools had targets for teaching Year 5 & Year 6 pupils to swim, and that given the current funding crisis in many schools, they simply did not have the money to provide coaches to take children swimming at other pools. The Cabinet Member advised that, in addition to offering alternative swimming venues, the Council was also looking at providing top-up swimming lessons during summer holidays, for pupils who missed out.
- e. The Panel sought clarification about what kind of information the Council had sought from Fusion that was not forthcoming, as referred to in the report. In response, officers advised that this related to staffing details.
- f. The Panel sought assurances about whether there would be any additional oversight and contract monitoring put in place over the 12 month notice period. In response, officers advised that they expected that Fusion would fully provide all of the services that they were contractually obliged to over the 12 month notice period, and that the Council would enforce the contract on that basis.
- g. The Panel sought assurances around whether, as one of the possible five options, there were leisure providers out there in the market that could viably take over the contract. In response, officers acknowledged that leisure operators had a very difficult period over Covid, with being forced to close. In addition to this, they had also been badly impacted by rising energy costs and the cost of living crisis. By way of example, it was noted that the energy costs for Haringey went up from £900k to £2.2m for leisure facilities. Officers commented that some operators had made their way through the crisis better than others, often with a greater level of support from the local authority. Officers advised that GLL were due to take over leisure provision in Enfield next

- week. It was suggested that there was still a viable market out there and that a number of boroughs were tendering contracts of between 2-5 years.
- h. In response to a question, officers provided assurances that the Cabinet report did not contain any exempt information and that all of it would be publically accessible. The report would be ready later that evening when published as part of the Cabinet agenda papers.
 - i. The Panel requested that the regular updates that were provided to members and residents about developments at Tottenham Green were reinstated and that regular comms. messages went out. In response, the Cabinet Member clarified that these were sent out from the previous lead members that held her portfolio. The Panel were advised that there had been a lull in communications because there was not much to update people on. The updates were ongoing and the most recent one was sent out on Friday, which provided an update on the successful installation of the high voltage electrical system. Officers clarified that the high voltage distribution board had to be specially designed for the site, which caused delays and then the specialist works had to be tendered, which also took time.

RESOLVED

Noted

9. THE IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS ON ELECTIONS

The report was introduced by Councillor Carlin, Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment as set out in the agenda pack at pages 57 to 92.

By way of introduction, the Panel was advised that this report provided details of the impact the introduction of Voter ID had on elections, the additional legislative changes which had been implemented and those which were scheduled to be implemented in accordance with the Elections Act 2022 and other government legislation.

Voter ID was seen problematic for certain group of people, it was noted that this was mainly for the younger population. Statistics outlined that 1% of people were turned away from voting for not obtaining a valid voters ID. Unfortunately, the statistics were not able to gather data on details including gender, age, and ethnicity.

Research had been conducted around the potential number of people who may not have had an ID to vote. There was an estimation of around 9500 Haringey residents who did not have a voter ID. Haringey, compared to other London boroughs, had the benefit of carrying out the by-elections with voter ID and there had been work had been carried out to encourage people to have voter ID, this was outlined in the presentation as set out in the agenda pack.

The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a) It was very challenging to obtain quantitative data on the amount of people who did not turn up at the polling station due to not having an ID to vote. The

- presentation highlights the turnout for the local government by-elections and indicates that low turnouts resulted in analysing data to be difficult.
- b) Officers advised that during the last election, it was noted that many people arrived with an ID and those who arrived without an ID, later came back with an ID to vote.
 - c) The Committee noted that there had been 4 local government by-elections this year, 3 of which were after the introduction of voter ID. These by-elections allowed the Electoral Registration Officer / Returning Officer to further refine plans in advance of major elections in 2024.
 - d) The Communications plan promoted voters ID by reaching out to local residents in the wards by emails, letters, posters, leaflets, and digital advertisement.
 - e) In response to a follow up question, the Committee was advised that by using more different creatives digitally, this would encourage a higher turnout, raise awareness, and prompt people to apply for a voter ID if needed.
 - f) The Committee was provided with an update on the new parliamentary boundaries. The Committee heard that the final set of boundaries was approved by the Privy Council early November. Following the dissolution of the current parliament, the current Tottenham and Hornsey & Wood Green would cease to exist. They would be replaced with Hampstead and Highgate, Hornsey and Friern Barnet, Southgate and Wood Green, and Tottenham (amended boundary). There were also plans to start the voter registration and voter ID campaign in February 2024.
 - g) The Committee noted that in terms the Voter Authority Certificates, these were all processed through the central government data system (Gov.uk) and limited information was available with only access to baseline statistics.
 - h) In response to a follow up question, the Committee noted that an engagement strategy had been implemented to reach out to young people in schools/sixth form. This would include working alongside with the schools and education colleagues to encourage participation.
 - i) The Committee raised concerns around digital poverty and questioned the approach on how to target people who may experience digital poverty. Officers advised that a new leaflet had been designed which contained information about voter registration in various languages. This leaflet also aimed to raise awareness about ensuring that people were on the electoral register first.
 - j) In terms of record keeping on the number of voters turned away, the Committee was advised that for the next two parliamentary elections, staff would be required to complete a statutory forms which would include statistical data of quantities and number of people turned away. However, this would not include data such as demographics.

RESOLVED

That the Committee to note the report.

10. FINSBURY PARK EVENTS

The report was introduced by Cllr Emily Arkell, Cabinet Member for Culture, Communities & Leisure as set out in the agenda pack at pages 93 – 100.

This report provided a summary of the current position regarding:

- The income generated from major events in Finsbury Park,
- What that income had been spent on
- The impact of that funding on other parks.

The borough held a number of major events in Finsbury Park every summer with over 10,000 people in attendance. This year, there had been two weekends with major events which included the Wireless Festival and the Krankbrother event.

Since 2012, the council had generated £8.7 million from events, and of that £7.4 million had come directly from events hosted in the park. The income had varied year on year both as the popularity of events had increased, but also following the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions during 2020 and 2021. This year, the income generated from events was approximately £1.27 million.

There were four key areas of spending of the income generated in the park which included:

- Money being reinvested in the park to improve or add new facilities in the park.
- Funded the base level of management that all parks in the borough received.
- Spending on an additional level of staffing resources dedicated to Finsbury Park.
- Spending on the cost of the events team who generated the income and managed the delivery of the events.
- There had been no major events during 2020-21 and this had been down to Covid.

The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a) The money generated from major events at Finsbury Park, does not contribute towards any of the maintenance and up keeping of any other parks in the borough.
- b) In terms of the base level of service for the park, Finsbury Parks Management formed part of the wider management of parks in the borough and received input from a range of shared service delivery which included playground maintenance, machinery, grass cutting, The Conservation Volunteers, and other similar services.
- c) Most of the funding for the parks came from events. It was noted that over time, the money the Council provided to fund Finsbury Park had been replaced by the income generated from events held at Finsbury Park. As a result, the park benefitted from maintaining and improving the park and did not fall into a position where savings had to be made elsewhere in the borough.

- d) The Committee sought for clarification regarding the spending of the income generated by Finsbury Park as the report highlighted that the overall cost of maintaining the park in 2022-23 was circa £1.61m. Officers confirmed that the Council continued to provide funding to Finsbury Park every year and was not solely funded by events. For instance, the £467,420 of investments for 2022-23, £300,000 of that had come from Council capital outside of the Finsbury Park income budget.
- e) The Committee requested for a clearer breakdown on the figures presented in the Expenditure and Income Table (Appendix A).
Action: To provide the Committee with updated table with breakdown of figures (Officer)
- f) In terms of the contracts held with major event companies, any planned events would be subject to licensing agreements every year and the event would need to be in line with the licencing requirements. Processes would be reviewed and adjustments would be made year on year.
- g) In response to a follow up question regarding increasing the level of income from the events companies, the Committee was advised that Finsbury Park was generating similar income to other large parks in London, such as Victoria Park. Victoria Park and Finsbury Park had generated a similar amount of money from 2 weekends of similar events last year.
- h) Officers added that the service was exploring ways to establish a better configuration of power supply for these events. Options around replacing diesel generators with greener options were considered with the support from Festival Republic.
- i) The Committee was assured that the events do not acquire the entire park for the festivals. The Richard Hope play space would remain open. The event only occupied around 30% of the park and the rest of the park would be available for use by the general public. Furthermore, local businesses would benefit from these events as there would be an influx of people coming into the borough.
- j) The Committee noted that all events were closely monitored. Issues and complaint relating to noise were supervised and controlled by the licensing configuration.
- k) The Committee sought clarification on works the Friends of the park were undertaking around their group's priorities. The Committee was advised that they were working towards delivering phase one of the Skate Park Project this year and the boundaries of the park were also being reviewed to improve entrances. In addition, toilets were seen as an issue within the park and as part of the Green Spaces Strategy, the service was working with young women and girls to focus on how to make the park more appealing and safer for them.
- l) The Committee highlighted some of the positive aspects of Finsbury Park. Events like the Wireless Festival had benefited the residents of Haringey and had attracted a wide range of people who could relish the opportunity to witness some of their favourite music live on stage.

RESOLVED

That the Committee to note the report.

11. CHANGE TO SCRUTINY MEMBERSHIP 2023/24

The report was introduced by Philip Slawther, Principal Scrutiny Officer as set out in the additional reports pack of the agenda at pages 1–4.

The Committee was advised that this reports sets out a number of changes to the membership of the scrutiny panels due to resignations and that the Committee to agree the changes to the membership as set out in the report.

RESOLVED

That Committee considered the report and agreed the changes to the membership.

12. SCRUTINY REVIEW: LANDLORD LICENSING IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The report was introduced by Philip Slawther, Principal Scrutiny Officer as set out in the additional reports pack of the agenda at pages 5 – 46.

Under the agreed terms of reference, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could assist the Council and the Cabinet in its budgetary and policy framework through conducting in-depth analysis of local policy issues and could make recommendations for service development or improvement.

The Committee may:

- (a) Review the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas.
- (b) Conduct research to assist in specific investigations. This may involve surveys, focus groups, public meetings and/or site visits.
- (c) Make reports and recommendations, on issues affecting the authority's area, or its inhabitants, to Full Council, its Committees or Sub-Committees, the Executive, or to other appropriate external bodies.

In this context, on 28th November 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a review project to look at Landlord Licensing in the Private Rented Sector.

The Committee provided positive feedback and credited all the hard work around producing this report.

The Committee noted that this report would go towards the Council Forward Plan and presented to the Cabinet in the next few months.

RESOLVED

- i. The Committee considered the report and approved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- ii. The Committee agreed to submit this report to Cabinet for a response.

13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The report was introduced by Philip Slawther, Principal Scrutiny Officer as set out in the agenda pack at pages 101 – 112.

This report provided an update on the work plan for 2022-24 for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee was advised that next meeting was scheduled for 9 January 2024 where the meeting would be reviewing the Complaints Annual Report and the budget recommendations around Communication, Strategy and Engagement.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee to note the report.

14. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

15. FUTURE MEETINGS

- 9 Jan 2024
- 18 Jan 2024 (Budget)
- 11 March 2024

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date