

MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 20TH JULY, 2020, 6.30 - 9.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillors: Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan and Khaled Moyeed

Co-opted Members: Mark Chapman and Luci Davin (Parent Governor representatives) and Lourdes Keever (Church representative)

30. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda item 1 in respect of filming at the meeting. Members noted the information contained therein.

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Yvonne Denny and Councillor Adam Jogee.

32. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Connor reported that she was a member of the Royal College of Nursing and that her sister worked as a GP in Tottenham.

34. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 22 June 2020 be approved.

36. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Councillor Kirsten Hearn, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability, reported that Covid -19 and the lockdown had disproportionately affected those within the community suffering from poverty and disadvantage and, in particular, Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME), elderly and disabled people. The focus of her portfolio in this

period had been ensuring that parks were safe and open to all and supporting safe and socially distant travel that was climate positive.

The Committee received updates on developments that had taken place within planning policy, transport planning, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and parks and then asked questions to the Cabinet Member and officers supporting her.

Simon Farrow, Head of Parks and Leisure, reported that his service had worked very closely with Public Health colleagues when re-opening facilities within parks. The view of Public Health had been that opening of football and basketball courts should not happen yet as it was not possible to practice social distancing within them. It was acknowledged that tennis courts could have been reopened earlier though. Playgrounds and open air gyms were being reopened at the moment. The view had been taken that there needed to be sanitation and permanent signage at each site and this was why it was taking longer than in some other boroughs, who had not taken the same measures. The additional cost of sanitation was £700 per week and three gardeners had been redeployed to undertake this work.

In answer to a question regarding the opening of paddling pools, Mr Farrow reported that it was not clear until recently that it would be permissible. They were now scheduled to re-open though. It was nevertheless debateable whether it was worth spending the money necessary for this to happen as they would probably only be open for one month. In addition, the parks budget was overspent by £1.5 million.

In respect of Finsbury Park, the number of staff there had been increased to 11.5 from 1.5 due to the income that had been received from events last summer. Staff in the park had been working very hard making sure park users observed social distancing and collecting litter, which had increased considerably. All of the money to maintain the park would be coming from the Council this year due to the lack of events.

The Cabinet Member stated that keeping people safe was a priority and that was why sanitation of play and gym equipment had been undertaken in Haringey despite some other boroughs not doing the same. It had also been felt very important to keep parks open for all and this had been achieved despite pressure to close them in the early part of the lockdown. It was not yet clear how much the government would assist local authorities financially to mitigate the financial pressures.

Mr Farrow reported that there had been an increased need for litter picking and bin emptying, which had impacted on the budget for the service. Approximately £0.5 million was being spent on litter and additional staff were having to be deployed to deal with it. More horticulture could be done if litter was reduced. An advertising campaign was being set up to encourage people to put rubbish in a bin or take it home. Education and engagement were necessary with enforcement used as a last resort. Trials had taken place of removing bins to encourage people to take home their waste had been trialled in some authorities, with some success. Removal of dog waste bins had been less successful. Some experimental measures were taking place in Haringey, including placing two skips on Ducketts Common to demonstrate the volume of rubbish and undertaking filming of Finsbury Park from a drone to show the build-up of litter during a day.

In respect of disposable barbecues, it was noted that there was not currently any by-law outlawing their use in parks. They could be a fire risk and cause damage to benches and so they were therefore discouraged.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member reported that they had wanted to re-open sports and play facilities so that children and young people had somewhere to go. Opening sports facilities had been easier to re-open as play equipment required work to ensure that it was both safe and in good working order. They would all be open again soon. Full details of the programme were on the Council's [website](#). It was noted that Homes for Haringey were responsible for twice as many playgrounds as the Council. In addition, the borough's school summer holiday programme had just started and there were a wide range of activities available.

Emma Williamson, Assistant Director for Planning, Building Standards and Sustainability, reported that work to address the issue of vehicles idling had been taking place with the Greater London Authority (GLA). This involved better registering and monitoring of the use of the machinery on construction sites as well as some enforcement. She would provide further information in due course (**Action – AD for Planning, Building Standards and Sustainability**). The Committee noted that work had also taken place with schools, with posters and masks being designed by children and young people to highlight the issue.

Ms Williamson also reported that a report had been due to be submitted to the Cabinet on School Streets that proposed priorities for action over five to ten years but it had been necessary to reconsider the approach in the light of the current pandemic. In particular, some schools would have had difficulty in re-opening due to social distancing requirements so urgent action had been needed. A bid had been made for funding to Transport for London and plans put together for consideration later in the year. The Council did not have sufficient funding to do all of the work that was necessary yet but would apply for grant funding as and when it became available. In addition, the Active Travel team were working with schools to encourage walking and cycling.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member reported that the tree allocation for different wards within the borough still stood and engagement would be taking place with ward Councillors. Particular priority would be given to areas where there was currently a lack of tree cover. As part of this, a number of trees were to be planted in Bruce Road in Tottenham. A bid for funding for parklets and cycling had recently been made and details of this could be shared with the Committee (**Action – Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability**).

In answer to a question, Maurice Richards – Principal Transport Planner – reported that consideration had been given to where the cycling infrastructure in the borough could be improved. In particular, work was planned to improve separation between cycles and motor vehicles. Consultation had taken place with Haringey Cycling Campaign on this. Most of the work required appeared to be straightforward and could be completed by September, which would allow full advantage to be taken of current Transport for London (TfL) grant funding. Funding for the design of a cycle route running from Crouch End to Tottenham had been obtained from TfL and it was hoped that funding could also be obtained for its implementation.

In answer to a question regarding illegal music events in parks, the Cabinet reported that staff had been redeployed to undertake observation of any preparations being made so that the Police could be alerted if necessary. This had been successful in disrupting some events. There was a very good relationship with Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams. The priority was to take action at an early stage, before significant numbers of people had congregated. She felt that safe parks were ones that were well used.

The Committee thanked the Cabinet Member and officers supporting her for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. The further information be provided to Committee Members by the Assistant Director for Planning, Building Standards and Sustainability on work undertaken by the Council to address idling; and
2. That further information be circulated to Committee Members by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability on the bid by the Council for grant funding for parklets and cycling that has recently been made.

37. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR LOCAL INVESTMENT & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Councillor Gideon Bull, the Cabinet Member for Local Investment and Economic Growth, reported on key developments within his portfolio. He stated that the Council was still committed to community wealth building, which had become even more important due to the forthcoming recession. There had been a severe downturn in trade for most businesses in the borough. Hospitality businesses had been particularly badly hit and there were a comparatively high number of these within the borough. The labour market had also been badly affected and 25,000 people had been furloughed alone in Tottenham. The government had introduced the Kick Start programme to provide opportunities for young people but there was currently a lack of detail about how this would work in practice.

He reported that footfall in Wood Green High Street was almost back up to pre-pandemic levels but the level of spending had not yet recovered. It was likely that this was due to lack of job security amongst residents. He paid tribute to the Council officers who had worked hard to ensure that the business grants that had been made available by the government had been distributed. In addition, officers in Haringey Adult Learning Service (HALS) had moved very quickly to switch courses on-line. Laptops and other IT hardware had been made available where required.

He reported that close to £50 million of grants for small business, hospitality and leisure businesses had been allocated by the Council so far. A lot of engagement had taken place with businesses and, in particular, he was keen to ensure a good relationship with the Wood Green Bid. In addition, work was also taking place with key anchor institutions in the borough, including the North Middlesex and Whittington hospitals.

It was important that as much of the Council's budget as possible was spent locally as this generated wealth in the local community. Close to 30% of Council contracts now went to local organisations. Insourcing was a key part of this policy and contracts were constantly being reviewed. Approximately 100 staff had recently been brought back in-house as part of the insourcing of facilities management as part of this policy.

In answer to a question, he stated that the Council's Economic Development Strategy remained the driver behind the vision for the local community. However, the focus would not be the same as it was before the pandemic. Reassurance was being given to businesses in the borough that Haringey remained a good place to do businesses and efforts were also being made to attract new businesses to set up in Haringey.

Peter O'Brien, Assistant Director for Regeneration and Economic Development, reported that the Council's Economic Development was informing all of the action that was currently being taken. This emphasised that a good economy was one that benefitted everyone and this was a deliberate move away from the focussing purely on growth. Plans were being put together for the next 12 to 18 months and focussing on re-opening, recovery and renewal. There would be targeted programmes aimed at supporting local residents and businesses. There was likely to be a large rise in unemployment when the furlough scheme ended though.

It was noted that the crisis had affected groups of people in different ways. Those who suffered from disadvantage had been hit harder. Young people had been affected particularly badly. Businesses had not been impacted equally. Retail, hospitality and the creative industries had been the most severely affected. There were nevertheless some areas where there were potential opportunities such as the green economy. In addition, work could also be done to enable local businesses to become part of the on-line economy. Work had been viewed as the route out of poverty but, with lower levels of job vacancies and a depressed economy, this might no longer be the case and other options for supporting the community would need to be developed.

The Cabinet Member reported that the Business and Planning Bill would give local authorities more scope for supporting businesses when it became law. For example, it would provide greater flexibility in allowing forecourt seating in restaurants. Engagement was taking place with residents, businesses and ward Councillors on initiatives. In answer to a question, he stated that advice and guidance had been given to shops in Wood Green on how to re-open safely following lockdown. There needed to be a strong corporate message about Haringey being a place to do business. He felt that there was particular scope to develop the early evening and night time economy in Wood Green. There was a positive relationship between the Council and the Wood Green Bid. There were some encouraging signs regarding the recovery of the area but residents needed to feel more secure in their employment before their spending levels recovered.

Mr O'Brien reported that the recovery of local high streets was likely to take place in stages. However, it was inevitable that some retailers would close. Most successful high streets were not reliant entirely on retail and also had facilities such as libraries, health centres and work space. Diversity was therefore important and options for filling empty shop units could be explored with landlords. In respect of the night time economy, it was agreed that this issue would be discussed with Wood Green ward

Councillors (Action – Assistant Director - Regeneration and Economic Development).

In answer to a question regarding “pop up” shops, Mr O’Brien stated that there had not been much use of units for these purposes during the last recession as there had not been the level of vacant units that there had been in some other areas. They could play a part in lifting high streets though and the Council could assist by encouraging their use. However, charity shops could sometimes impact negatively on established shops selling similar goods.

In answer to a question regarding the low take-up of apprenticeships in the construction industry, Mr O’Brien reported that young people had a poor perception of the sector. They were also not fully aware that it was relatively well paid. Work was being undertaken with Haringey Construction Partnership to identify the key challenges that employers faced. There was a need for a regular supply of skilled staff and some skills were very difficult to find. Demand for such skills remained strong, despite the pandemic. It was acknowledged that more work needed to be undertaken with schools to promote opportunities in construction.

The Cabinet Member commented that Haringey Construction Partnership played an important role in bringing businesses in the sector together so that they were able to exchange ideas. He also raised the importance of the creative sector to the borough and, in particular, fashion. In answer to a question, it was noted that there currently was a lack of information on businesses that had not survived lockdown. Businesses had indicated at the start of lockdown that they had funds to survive for approximately three months. Many were now relying on short term and time limited government assistance. Future surveys of local businesses would provide details on the impact on businesses.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member reported that £3.13 million had been allocated to the discretionary grants scheme for small businesses in the borough. Over 3,000 businesses had received grants so far and the Council was on course to allocate all of the funding. Four priority areas had been identified and some businesses had not been eligible, such as ones located in shared retail space. However, grants were payable to those responsible for paying the business rates and therefore did not necessarily benefit all businesses in such accommodation.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their kind assistance.

RESOLVED:

That the potential for the development of the night time economy in Wood Green be discussed by the Cabinet Member for Local Investment and Economic Growth and relevant offices with Wood Green ward Councillors.

38. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Committee Members highlighted that the following outstanding pieces of work:

- Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks. The progress report in respect of the implementation of the recommendations had been due to be considered at the Committee’s meeting in March, which had been cancelled;
- Business Support (Procurement and the Local Supply Chain). Evidence had been gathered from a range of sources and conclusions and recommendations now needed to be developed.

The work plan for 2020-22 also needed to be developed further. A survey of community and voluntary sector organisations had been undertaken as part of this and had highlighted areas of concern for local residents before the Covid-19 pandemic. Consideration of the recovery and renewal plan for the borough following the pandemic needed to be included within the work plan. In particular, it was important to ensure that there is a joined-up and strategic approach.

AGREED:

That further discussions by the Committee on the development of the work plan for 2020-22 be arranged and a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

39. FUTURE MEETINGS

- 6 October 2020;
- 23 November 2020;
- 12 January 2021;
- 18 January 2021; and
- 15 March 2021.

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair

Date