

MINUTES OF MEETING Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Tuesday, 14th December, 2021, 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Scott Emery, Gideon Bull, Dana Carlin and Eldridge Culverwell

ALSO ATTENDING: Ian Sygrave

116. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

117. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ogiehor and Cllr Amin.

118. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

120. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

121. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 11th November were agreed as a correct record.

122. TREES UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation which provided an update around Queen's Wood, Parkland Walk, street trees, funding for new trees and staffing resources within the Trees team. The presentation was introduced by Simon Farrow, Highways, Parking,

Parks & Open Spaces Manager as set out in the agenda pack at pages 9-18. Alex Fraser, Principal Tree & Nature Conservation Manager, was also present for this agenda item. Cllr Hakata, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency and Deputy Leader of the Council, was also present for this agenda item. The following arose during the discussion of the presentation:

- a. The Panel sought clarification around the number of trees removed in a year. The Panel noted that the presentation stated that 191 trees had been removed in the previous year, whilst the budget papers for agenda Item 9, suggested that it was 300. In response officers advised that 191 was an average, but that that the service had been removing more trees, particularly due to a backlog associated with Covid. Officers clarified that 191 related to removal of street trees whilst the 300 figure included trees in parks and open spaces.
- b. A Panel Member welcomed the fact that the Trees team was up to full strength but raised concerns around a failure to respond to a specific enquiry for five months. Officers offered their apologies for the failure to respond and advised that the service had been operating at 40% capacity for some time.
- c. The Panel noted that in relation to Parkland Walk, one of the key lessons learnt was around contractors cutting down trees that were beyond the scope of the works and assurances were sought that rigorous monitoring of contractors was taking place. In response, officers advised that the team had undergone a fundamental restructure and that contract monitoring was much more robust. Officers advised that they did not think that previous mistakes in this regard would be replicated.
- d. In relation to a question around capital funding, officers advised that the existing capital provision from LBH was £70k for tree planting, but that there was further provision for up to £30k in the budget for match funding.
- e. In relation to concerns about Queens Wood, officers advised that the decision to remove the trees was done to mitigate the Council's financial risk from an insurance claim and that it was felt that it was within the Council's interests to mitigate this exposure otherwise they would have potentially been liable for hundreds of thousands of pounds. In relation to a follow up, officers advised that in a similar situation in the future, they would still be minded to remove four out of the five trees, due to the potential cost exposure and the legal advice that they had received.
- f. In relation to a question around trees being felled as part of the bridge replacement works at Stanhope Gardens, officers advised that the new bridge had to be higher than the old one, and that the construction works would kill the affected trees, so a decision had been taken to remove those trees before works commenced. It was noted that Planning Permission for those works had been granted the week before.
- g. In relation to concerns about the types of trees planted, officers advised that they typically sought to plant trees that were easy to maintain, suitable to their environment and not prone to particular diseases. This included consideration of proactively trying to improve maintenance costs or the likely impact of a particular type of tree, on a particular location. Officers advised that they effectively had a list of trees to use and that these were much suitable than some of the trees that were planted three or four generations ago.
- h. Officers agreed to provide the Panel with a written response on the felling of trees on Stationers Road as well as the felling of trees in Finsbury Park and the

extent to which the impact on wildlife was considered. **(Action: Simon Farrow/Alex Fraser).**

- i. In relation to a particular case involving some large trees near the Roundway, officers advised that regular maintenance was carried out on those trees and that they did look at replacing certain trees with more suitable ones in particular locations.
- j. The Chair advised that she would like to see a cost analysis about how much money was spent on mitigating insurance claims against how much was spent on tree maintenance. **(Action: Simon Farrow/Alex Fraser).**
- k. The Chair also raised concerns about the discrepancy in tree coverage between, the west and the east of the borough and was concerned that the replacement works and tree sponsorship seemed to be disproportionately focused on the west of the borough and would exacerbate the existing disparity. The Chair requested a breakdown of the number of trees on a ward by-ward basis. **(Action: Simon Farrow/Alex Fraser).**

RESOLVED

That the update in relation to trees was noted.

123. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Panel undertook a Q&A session with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency and Deputy Leader of the Council on his portfolio. The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around what was being done to engage with young people around wildlife, trees and open spaces. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the redesign of the Parks staffing structure included an engagement officer and a key part of that role was around outreach work. This outreach work would include engagement with schools and young people. The Cabinet Member set out that a high priority for the Parks service was to engage with groups that were not already well engaged with. Officers added that there was also a full time volunteering officer that had been added to the service and that as part of the parks and Green Spaces Strategy, engagement would be a key output for the service. One element of the strategy was having an annual celebration of community involvement event and that this would include a specific focus on celebrating involvement in the east of the borough.
- b. The Panel commented that in comparison to other boroughs, it was felt that Haringey's Electric Vehicle charging points were too slow and too expensive to use. The Panel enquired what could be done to improve this. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the current charging arrangements were predominantly located in parking spaces, these arrangements allowed the

Council to significantly increase capacity and the Council was in the process of adding another 80 new chargers in the coming weeks. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the existing chargers were not the fastest on the market. The Council was also looking at introducing a pilot scheme for faster lamp post chargers and it was anticipated that, the two combined, would give the borough a good mix of EV charging infrastructure.

- c. In light of the Leader's recent comments suggesting that the NLWA should pause the procurement exercise for a new waste incinerator at the site in Edmonton, the Panel sought clarification from the Cabinet Member whether that would impact his vote on the issue at the upcoming NLWA meeting. The Cabinet Member recognised that the Leader had a responsibility to speak up on behalf of concerned residents, but he advised that, as a Board Member of the NLWA, he was required by statute to vote in the interests of the NLWA and that he could not be moved to vote in any particular way.
- d. The Panel suggested that a campaign should be launched around restoring civic pride with the aim of tackling fly-tipping. The Panel also suggested that more should be done to educate residents about what materials could and could not be recycled. The Panel further set out that they would like to see the return of the reuse and recycle centre at Ashley Road. The Panel suggested that these were areas that the Cabinet Member could work jointly with Cllr Chandwani. The Cabinet Member advised that he shared the concerns around civic pride and advised the panel members that the NLWA did a lot of work around reduce, reuse and recycling programmes. One example was that the NLWA recently launched a mattress recycling programme and that 1300 mattresses had been recycled to date.
- e. The Panel questioned what could be done in relation to possible insourcing of the leisure contract to level up the disparity in leisure facilities in the east versus the west of the borough. In response, the Cabinet Member commented that the Council was in the process of examining all of its existing external contracts, to see if a better deal could be achieved through insourcing. The Council had recently brought the New River sports centre back in-house, and this centre was under good management and was working well.
- f. The Panel sought clarification on the timetable and consultation proposals for the potential implementation of an LTN scheme around the Ladders, Endymion Road and Wightman Road. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that officers had been collecting a significant amount of traffic data and air quality monitoring data in the area. From this data, preliminary designs would be drawn up and these would be consulted upon with residents and local businesses over the course of January and February. The intention was that this would then be turned in to a piece of genuine co-produced design work that would be ready for early summer. In addition to this, a separate piece of work was being undertaken on Green Lanes to assess the feasibility of accelerating walking, cycling and public transport schemes in this area.
- g. Cllr Chandwani updated the Panel on some of the recent changes to waste legislation and agreed to come back to the next Panel meeting to undertake a Q&A. **(Clerk to note).**

RESOLVED

Noted.

124. SCRUTINY OF THE 2022/23 DRAFT BUDGET / 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2022/23-2026/27)

The Panel considered and commented on the Council's 2022/23 Draft Budget / 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 – 2026/27 proposals relating to the Place priority of the Borough Plan. The papers were introduced by John O'Keefe – Head of Finance (Capital, Place & Regen), as set out in the agenda pack at pages 19-94 of the agenda pack. Along with a cover report the budget papers included the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Key lines of enquiry for budget setting
- Appendix B – 2022/23 Draft Budget & 2021/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy Report (presented to Cabinet 8th December 2020)
- Appendix C – 2022/23 New Revenue Budget Proposals
- Appendix D - 2022/23 New Capital Budget Proposals
- Appendix E – Proposed 2022/23-2026/27 Capital Programme
- Appendix F – Previously agreed MTFS savings.

The Panel were advised that there were no new savings proposals put forward in the budget for 2022/23 and that the budget included around £11.8m of growth proposals. There was, therefore, an opportunity for the Council to have some time and space to assess its existing savings programme. There was also a refresh of the Borough Plan underway.

The following arose as part of the discussion of the Draft Budget & 2021/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around the impact of pre-agreed savings that had not been met, particularly given the impact of Covid, on the overall budget picture. In response, officers advised that the papers included a savings tracker, which was RAG rated. The Panel were advised that the extent to which these savings had not been achieved had already been factored into the 2022/23 budget. The savings would be rolled over to the base budget for future years.
- a. The Chair sought clarification around whether there were any new growth proposals for community safety contained within the budget. Officers responded that there were no specific growth proposals in this area. The Chair commented that there were a number of staffing pressures in this area and sought clarification from the Cabinet Member whether discussion to this effect had been undertaken. In response, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, advised that he was new in post and that no discussions had taken place to date. However, the Cabinet Member advised that he would be looking to pick this up as part of his upcoming one-to-one discussions with officers.
- b. The Panel sought reassurances about a strategy for dealing with waste dumped by private landowners, such as at Somerset Gardens. In response, officers advised that this was something that had been raised in previous

- budgets, particularly in relation to Housing Associations. Officers advised that they were looking at how to tackle this issue but commented that previous experience had shown that it could be challenging to hold landowners to account.
- c. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency advised the Panel that he was seeking to improve green spaces in the Borough, and he welcomed the additional investment in the parks team, which he suggested was a three or four fold increase in staffing resources. The Cabinet Member also welcomed the commitment to a net gain in tree numbers year-on-year. The Cabinet Member advised that a key priority for the budget was to increase revenue growth in climate and the environment and ensure additional resources in this area. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the significant additional investment in parks asset management that was reflected in the budget, partially in recognition of the increased profile of parks during the pandemic.
 - d. The Panel sought assurances around the additional investment in blocked gullies and whether the investment of £326k was sufficient. In response, the Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Welfare and the Public Realm advised that this was a £326k additional investment into the revenue base budget and that it would, therefore, be available every year, rather than a one-off sum. In addition to the revenue investment there was also a £355k investment in the capital budget for dealing with blocked gullies. The Cabinet Member advised that this funding would be used to ensure that every gully in Haringey was cleaned on an annual basis. It was anticipated that this would make a significant improvement to flooding and blocked drains the borough.
 - e. In relation to a question around additional investment in the budget around waste contract changes and whether this had taken into account upcoming legislative changes around waste, such as paper separation, the Cabinet Member advised that these legislative changes were not due to come in to force until 2024/25 and so would need to be factored into the next iteration of the waste contract and subsequent rounds of budget setting. Officers advised that the additional investment related to additional waste disposal costs arising from a shortfall in recycling, some of which was due to changes in what could and could not be recycled. Veolia were no longer required to cover these costs so the Council would need to do so.
 - f. The Panel queried whether there was scope for further invest to save proposals into increasing the recycling rate and thereby reduce waste collection costs. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that Haringey was already well ahead of many of the neighbouring boroughs in the NLWA in terms of waste separation. The budget also contained a revenue bid for a recycling officer, which was matched funded by Veolia, and would assist with the education, information and advice agenda around recycling. Officers advised that Haringey was already undertaking a number of the legislative changes that were being brought, such as a separate kitchen waste service and the separation of six items at kerbside. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the additional costs were due to a contractual issue, rather than a performance

- issue. The Panel was advised that the Council was also piloting a scheme to recycle small electrical items such as toasters.
- g. The Panel sought assurances about deploying any staff that were no longer required as a result of the capital bid around mechanisation of street cleansing. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the additional investment in mechanical street sweepers had been made in previous rounds of the MTFS. It was clarified that the bid in question was for £96k for additional jet washing equipment. The Panel were also assured that alongside the mechanical street sweeping machines, there was still a requirement for manual sweeping to take place in the nooks and crannies of a particular street.
 - h. In response to a question around overlaps in portfolios, the Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Welfare and the Public Realm assured the Panel that she spoke regularly with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency and that they worked together closely on a range of issues.
 - i. The Panel welcomed the additional investment into cleaning blocked gullies and commented that part of the issue related to historic underinvestment in this area. The Panel sought assurances that troublesome locations would be cleaned more than once a year and that there would also be provision to clean hard to access locations such as Haringey Passage. In response, the Cabinet Member reiterated that the additional investment would allow every drain and gully to be cleaned once a year and she assured the Panel that troublesome locations would receive additional cleaning. The Cabinet Member clarified that this did not mean that instances flooding would never happen again, not least because of London's outdated sewage system, but that Haringey was doing what it could to prevent blockages in the parts of the drainage network that it was responsible for maintaining.
 - j. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member advised that part of the cleansing issues in and around Turnpike Lane related to the fact there were timed collections in place and the additional investment in pavement washing equipment would make a difference to this but, it would also be necessary to address the underlying bin containment issue.
 - k. The Cabinet Member highlighted the additional investment into maintaining carriageways contained in the budget. In response to a question, it was noted that the £20m investment into this area was a significant amount and it was felt that this was an achievable level of investment.

Following the discussion on the 2022/23 Draft Budget/MTFS 2022/23-2026/27, the Panel put forward the following recommendations to Cabinet, subject to ratification by the parent Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) The Panel were broadly supportive of the budget proposals and welcomed the level of investment into the borough. The Panel were particularly pleased to see the long overdue investment into the maintenance of the boroughs drains and road gullies, and a commitment that every drainage asset in the borough would be cleaned at least once a year.
- 2) The Panel welcomed the commitment to invest in the borough's tree stock and noted the aim of achieving a net neutral position. The panel advocated for additional investment in this area, above the £75k per year, rising to £100k per

year with match funding, that had been allocated in the budget. The Panel felt that Cabinet should make firm commitment to a net increase in the number of trees in the borough, particularly in light of the historic decline in tree numbers over recent years due to an underinvestment in this area.

- 3) The Panel sought a commitment from Cabinet that the existing inequities in tree coverage across the borough would be addressed. The Panel noted that the overwhelming number of sponsored trees to date were in the west and centre of the borough. Cabinet should commit to ensuring that the east of the borough was prioritised when planting new trees. Cabinet should also make a specific commitment that low levels of tree coverage in wards such as Tottenham Hale and Bruce Grove would be addressed.
- 4) The Panel requested that Cabinet provided assurances that areas of lighting in parks where sections of the park were lit, whilst others are in shadow, were looked at as part on the investment in improved lighting. As it was felt that this could create a false sense of security for people travelling through parks at night. The Panel would also like assurances that preservation of wildlife habitat will be considered when determining lighting requirements in our parks and open spaces.
- 5) The Panel noted that a large proportion of the active travel schemes proposed were unfunded at present and would like assurances that funding for these schemes would be pursued. As part of the Road Safety Strategy, the Panel would like to see additional investment into active travel, with a particular focus on improving cycling infrastructure.
- 6) That Panel requested clarification on the funding for the Highways Asset Maintenance programme proposal. The bid was funded by council borrowing for the first year 2022-23. Thereafter it was assumed that there will be grant funding available to undertake this work. The Panel sought clarification/ further information about how robust this assumption of further funding was.

RESOLVED

That the Panels considered and provided recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), on the 2022/23 Draft Budget/MTFS 2022/23-2026/27 and proposals relating to the Scrutiny Panel's remit.

125. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

That the work programme was noted and any changes therein were put to the parent Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

126. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

127. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

3rd March 22

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date