

MINUTES OF MEETING Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Thursday, 15th December, 2022, 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Scott Emery, Eldridge Culverwell, George Dunstall, Tammy Hymas, Michelle Simmons-Safo (Chair) and Alexandra Worrell

ALSO ATTENDING: Ian Sygrave (Co-optee)

181. 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'.

182. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jogee, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Jobs and Community Cohesion.

183. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

184. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

185. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

The Panel received a deputation on major events in Finsbury Park, from the Friends of Finsbury Park Group (FOFPG). The deputation was introduced by Gina Harkell and Lawrence Singh. The key points of the deputation are summarised as:

- 2022 saw the biggest Wireless Festival so far with half the useable park fenced off from 22nd June - 24th July. 250k people attended over the six days, most of whom were not from Haringey. FOFPG would like to see the Council move away from large scale events and to adopt a more collaborative approach with the local community, to use the space as a unique area promoting biodiversity and offering families a natural outdoor green space to enjoy, play sports and to use the children's playgrounds.

- The Council is consulting on its Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. FOFPG believes a more consultative approach is more in-line with the stated aims of the strategy.
- Only 8% of tickets went to Haringey residents. Most came from outside London. Tickets were £130 – it was suggested that this may have contributed to people trying to surge the entrances to get in for free.
- FOFPG advised that they would like to see the events stopped for three reasons:
 - Public Safety: There was poor crowd control at the park entrance to the festivals on Seven Sisters Road as thousands of festival goers blocked the road outside. It had to be cordoned off by police blocking traffic and the tube station. Using videos, we have shown how close the event came to a tragedy as the crowd surged forward and people were crushed at the front trying to enter the festival. The event resulted in a lot of bad publicity for both Haringey Council and Live Nation in both national and local newspapers and BBC TV. Live Nation has had similar events happen at other festivals it organises and 8 people dies in a Live Nation event in Houston.
 - Environmental damage to the park: Grass was pounded into oblivion, tree branches broken and there was structural damage to drains and kerbs. Wildlife suffered.
 - The negative impact on the community, which has resulting in increasing opposition to these events. The petition being collected by FOFPG has over 2400 signatures.
- Combating the impact of climate change is incompatible with providing large scale festivals. These are more safely provided in purpose built stadiums like the 02 or Wembley.

The following arose during the discussion of the deputation:

- a. The Panel enquired whether the Friends group had an alternative funding proposals to cover the shortfall in income from events, if they were to be stopped. This was felt to be of particular concern given the pressures on existing budgets. In response, the Friends group advised that they felt that Finsbury Park should be funded from the Parks budget, just like every other park. It was felt that parks were a core service offer and key community resource which should be funded just like any other key service. The Friends group set out that the judicial review, clearly set out that the money raised from events had to be spent on Finsbury Park. It was suggested that getting any detailed financial information from the Council was difficult, but that the latest 2020/21 accounts set out that the staffing budget for Finsbury Park was £871k. Ms Harkell suggested that this figure seemed implausible and questioned how much the staff were being paid, given the number of staff employed there.
- b. The Panel sought clarification about how they would like to see the impacts highlighted by the deputation minimised in some way. In response, the deputation party advised that the friends group was not in favour of any of the festivals taking place, particularly as at £130 a ticket, these weren't for local people. The parks should be funded through the revenue budget and they

- would like to see a return to the old days of having local free festivals in the park.
- c. The Panel queried whether there were any community benefits that could be used to make these festivals more accessible to local people, such as free tickets. In response, the friends group advised that they did not think it was possible to have these events in the parks safely, there were too many access points and it was not feasible to employ enough staff to cover them all. The Videos of people climbing over fences and crowd surges were alarming and there were grave concerns for people's safety.
 - d. The Chair thanked the Friends group for their deputation.

RESOLVED

Noted.

186. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 14th November be approved as a correct record.

187. PARKS UPDATE

Clerk's note- the Chair agreed to take the presentations for agenda items 7, 8 and 9 together. Questions on these items would then be taken as part of Agenda Item 10 – Cabinet Member Questions.

The Panel received a report which provided the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel with an update on the current performance and work programme within the Parks Team. The report was introduced by Simon Farrow, Head of Parks and Leisure as set out in the addendum reports pack at pages 1-6.

RESOLVED

That the update was noted

188. LEISURE UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation which provided the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel with an update on Haringey physical activity and sport in the borough. The presentation was introduced by Simon Farrow, Head of Parks and Leisure as set out in the addendum reports pack at pages 7-18.

RESOLVED

That the presentation was noted

189. UPDATE ON THE SUMMER MAJOR EVENTS PROGRAMME

190. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER COMMUNITIES AND CIVIC LIFE

The Panel undertook a questions and answer session with Cllr Julie Davies, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Civic Life regarding the parks and leisure elements of her portfolio. Questions from Panel members on agenda items 7,8 & 9 were also incorporated into this part of the meeting. The following arose as part of this Q&A session:

- a. The Panel sought clarification around new sporting equipment and also what was happening with the tennis courts at Priory Park. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that resurfacing work was due to take place on a number of tennis courts in the borough and that overall, the Cabinet Member was pleased with the amount of investment that they had been able to put into New River and in terms of new equipment. Officers advised that they were working with the FA on a national scheme about improving local football pitches. It was hoped that they would lead to some additional investment in Haringey. More cover had also been put in place for tractor drivers to support sports pitch maintenance. In relation to the tennis courts at Priority Park, officers advised that there was a contract in place with Georgians who provided private coaching lessons on the courts, but that they also give free lessons to local residents. The Council was working with the LTA to improve the tennis court facilities and it was hoped that there would be two new courts and two mini-courts along with floodlighting, Planning Permission dependent. In general, the Cabinet Member advised that Haringey was down on swimming lanes and pitch space, but that the administration was seeking to improve this.
- b. The Panel sought clarification about what was happening with the Haringey Walks campaign. The Panel also enquired what the Cabinet was doing to tackle health inequalities across the borough. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged the need to tackle health inequalities, especially post pandemic, and advised that this was taking place over several different portfolios. It was acknowledged that there was some work needed to improve the facilities at leisure centres and to increase participation levels, particularly in the east of the borough. Officers advised that Haringey Walks was still very much active and that 243 walks were delivered in the current year, with 2000 people taking part. Officers advised that they welcomed the Panel's input as they developed the new physical activity & sport strategy next year. Part of this discussion, it was suggested, could be around where to target financial resources to get the best results i.e. Haringey walks or by funding leisure centre concessions.
- c. The Panel raised concerns about the Finsbury Park boundary review and the stated aim of making the park more permeable. It was questioned why Sustrans were involved in this review and why the Council was starting from a point of view that the park should be more permeable. A previous EVA conducted by the police concluded that the park should be made less permeable and that gates should be locked. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the review was something she inherited as Cabinet Member, and that she welcomed increasing active travel rates. The Cabinet Member advised that she took safety issues in Finsbury Park very seriously, including VAWG. It was suggested that the lighting in Finsbury Park had made a significant difference to the safety of park users. It was also suggested that similar schemes in New York and Boston had made their parks safer by increasing the

- number of entrance and exit points The Cabinet Member advised that the review would involve consultation with the local community and that the police would also be heavily involved in this. Any safety concerns raised by the police would be taken on board fully. The Cabinet Member set out that the park was very large and had around 8 entrance points. It was suggested that there was a discussion to be had about whether all of these entrances were needed and whether it might be safer to have more exit points in certain places. The Cabinet Member assured Members that whilst there may be a working assumption that fewer boundaries could make the park safer, if this was not the case then they would not do it. Officers agreed that the ultimate outcome had to be a safer park and that there was no fixed agenda on how to take this forward.
- d. The Panel queried what more could be done to reduce noise nuisance from large events at Finsbury Park. In response, officers advised that noise nuisance was managed through the licensing process and that the licence set out how loud the sound could be off-site. There were eight monitoring sights and these did not change from event to event. Officers acknowledged the point made about different events being located in different parts of the park and the effect this had on noise in certain parts of the borough. The noise for each event was actively monitored and there were reports available for each event.
 - e. The Panel sought assurances about what was being done to hold Fusion to account to ensure that they provided the services they were supposed to deliver. Given Fusion's financial issues, the Panel also sought assurances around what would happen if they could not afford to continue to provide leisure services in Haringey. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged a level of dissatisfaction with the service provided and the fact that certain facilities were out of action. The Panel was advised that officers were pushing fusion hard to resolve the issues and that meetings had taken place with the Chief Executive of the national company to try and resolve it. The Cabinet Member advised that she would continue to assess how to best take this issue forwards.
 - f. In response to a question about provision of facilities for children in Finsbury Park, officers advised that there had been £759k spent on children's play equipment over the last three years, including the creation of the accessible play space. Officers were working with the Friends group about further improvements including upgrading the skate park. The Cabinet Member set out that investment into play equipment would continue, including in smaller parks and green spaces.

RESOLVED

Noted

191. SCRUTINY OF THE 2023/24 DRAFT BUDGET AND 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/2028

The Panel received a covering report with a number of appendices, that set out the Council's draft budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/2028 proposals relating to the Panel's remit. The report was introduced by John O'Keefe, Head of Finance (Capital, Place & Economy) a set out in the agenda pack at pages 17 to 94. Cllr Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities & Civic Life was

present, along with Cllr Chandwani, Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services, and Cllr Hakata, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Environment and Transport, and Deputy Leader of the Council. A number of officers from the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate were also present.

By way of introduction, the Panel was advised that the report contained a summary of the draft budget proposals that were submitted to Cabinet the previous week. The proposals related to the revenue and capital General Fund budget as well as the HRA revenue and capital budgets, and the Dedicated Schools Grant. The report noted that at present there was a £3.1m budget gap and that this was after circa £5.5m of additional one off funding (reserves) had been utilised. A final MTFs report would be presented to Cabinet in February, which would reflect an updated financial position, having taken in to account the final levies and funding precepts from the Mayor, as well as the outcome of the local government funding settlement. The Panel noted that the Council continued to maintain a wide ranging capital programme. There was around £2.5m in growth budget provision; £490k of non-delivery of savings; and £6.6m of new savings, within the Environment and Neighbourhoods budget,

The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel sought clarification around the increased investment in the boroughs parks and streets identified in the report, and whether this was linked to a reduction in funding from TfL. In response, the Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Residents Services advised that TfL's finances had been hit hard by the pandemic and that its funding settlement from the government was in a state of flux. It was noted that TfL funded transport related things, such as crossings and road safety schemes, rather than Parks. In Haringey, TfL were also supposed to fund maintenance of TfL managed roads and pavements (TfL Red Routes), but this had not happened due their ongoing funding problems. In summary, the Panel was advised that the authority was clear on the funding it would receive from TfL for this year but did not know about what would be received in future years.
- b. The Panel sought clarification about the reducing trend of expenditure for particular schemes within the capital budget. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that this reflected the fact that earlier tranches of investment would reduce the need for ongoing spend. The example given was replacing the borough's street lighting and the fact that this should last for 30 years, the investment was front-loaded and so less investment was required in subsequent years of that capital scheme. Capital schemes were profiled over a five year period in the MTFs.
- c. In relation to a question on self-financing capital schemes and instances where these may proceed despite not meeting their costs, officers advised that each scheme would produce its own business case and if this business case did not add up then Cabinet would be asked to review this and make a decision as to whether they would like to proceed. This was usually done in the context of where there were policy outcomes or drivers attached to that scheme. Examples of self-financing schemes in the E&N budget were given as Finsbury Park; the parks vehicles budget, upgrading these produced lower fleet running costs; and carbon reduction of parks buildings.
- d. In relation to saving EN_SAV_001, the Panel sought clarification about the savings expected as a result of LTNs and School Streets programmes and how

- those figures had been calculated. In response, officers advised that the income had been estimated based on their experience of School Streets in the borough and also LTNs going live. The modelling assumed a higher level of compliance and reduced income as these schemes became embedded. The AD for Direct Services emphasised that the driver for these schemes was not about income and that increased compliance was what was being sought.
- e. In relation to a follow-up question on the above mentioned saving, and how increased debt recovery of parking fines would support the Council's ethical debt policy, the Cabinet Member advised that these were two separate things. The Council had delegated legal powers to issue a PCN, rather than pursue the case in court and would continue to do so. The ethical debt policy was set up to help people with the cost of living crisis where they had accumulated debt through no fault of their own, such as they could not pay their Council Tax, rather than were they had committed a criminal offense. In relation to a further follow-up question, the Cabinet Member advised that debt recovery would be increased through the new IT system and the ability to cross reference data checks to ensure that notices were issued to the correct people.
 - f. In relation to EN_SAV_001, the panel sought clarification about the new 4-5 area Heavy Goods Vehicle Restriction Zones CCTV Enforcement (£574K saving) and whether this meant that the Council was reducing HGV enforcement. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that they reviewed the location of the cameras every year to see if their continued presence was justified in light of the number of contraventions. The Panel were assured that there were no plans to relocate the HGV enforcement cameras in Harringay ward due to low levels of compliance there. The saving in questions related to the creation of four or five more HGV zones in the borough and was an income generating measure.
 - g. In relation to a question about current in-year overspends, officers advised that some of these had been corrected through base budget corrections put into next years' budget. Officers were working a number of work streams to reduce overspends.
 - h. In response to a question about what was being done to meet the budget gap, officers advised that the things happening between now and February should cover that budget gap but that at present, it was just not possible to say for certain as there were a lot of things that were beyond the Council's control.
 - i. The Panel queried what was included in the £1.3m saving related to the waste saving review. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that this saving was not due until 2025/26 and so the proposal was still at a very embryonic stage. The Council was currently engaging its residents to see what they would like to see as part of any future waste services contract. The administration would also need to determine the future model for any such arrangements, and whether this would be outsourced, insourced, or even a hybrid. It was suggested that there may be savings from combining a number of contracts held across the Council, with Veolia.
 - j. In relation to the previous saving PL20/9, the panel requested an update on getting Spurs to pay match day cleaning costs. In response, the Cabinet member advised that the wider impact from Spurs was covered under the Local Area Management Plan (LAMP). The Cabinet Member advised that talks with Spurs on paying match day cleaning costs paused due to Covid and needed to

- restart. It was suggested that existing arrangements were insufficient and so it was not just about getting Spurs to pay for what was being done now.
- k. In relation to the previous saving PL20/17, the Panel requested clarification about whether the number of subscriptions were decreasing or whether it was the overall volume of waste. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the number of subscriptions was increasing but that the volume of waste could be down due to a very hot summer. Subscriptions were at full capacity in some areas but not in others, so work was continuing about how best to resource this.
 - l. The Panel commented on the extent to which buy-to-let landlords were selling up and queried the extent to which this had been factored into the income assumptions made on private sector licensing schemes. In response, officers advised that it was a five-year scheme and that income and expenditure would have to balance, so if there was a drop in income than the expenditure would have to be reduced. Officers set out that the savings came from efficiencies from having two schemes in place, as well as a possible increase in fees. Officers advised that they had not seen any evidence of a reduction in take up from the schemes and had received 9k application to date from 20k expected applications over the whole five year period.
 - m. In relation to EN_SAV_004, the panel sought clarification about not recruiting to existing vacancies within the parks service, as well as the reduction in the small green space improvement plan. In response, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Civic Life advised that this related to not recruiting to a vacant dedicated weed control post in parks. The post was to operate new machinery for removing weeds without using pesticides. The machinery would be used by other staff across the parks service instead. Officers advised that was only a two year scheme and that it would go into the budget in April 2023 and would be come out again from 2025/26.
 - n. In relation to concerns about the lights being left on at Stroud Green Primary School all night, Members were advised that this is something that should be taken up with the school, and the Head Teacher, directly.
 - o. In relation to parks and leisure income efficiencies (EN_SAV_004), the Panel queried about rent reviews for café's in parks. In response, officers advised that these took place every five years and that when this took place for individual cafes would be determined by where they were in the five-year cycle. The value of the business was taken into account when reviews were undertaken. There were two types of lease in parks, commercial leases and community leases, which received a 40% reduction. Commercial lease rent calculations would be based on market rates for park cafe, rather than a café on a high street.
 - p. The Panel agreed to put forward a recommendation to Cabinet about seeking assurances that the authority would be engaging robustly with Tottenham Hotspur F.C., to ensure that it paid its fair share of the clean-up costs from match days and other event days.
 - q. The Panel also recommended that, in relation to EN_SAV_00, Cabinet reconsider the part of this saving relating to not recruiting to existing vacancies within the parks service. The Panel would like to see the weed control operative post recruited to and that net £45k saving found from elsewhere.

RESOLVED

That the Panel considered and provided recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, on the Council's 2023/24 Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/2028 proposals relating to the Panel's remit.

192. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

The work programme was noted.

193. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

194. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

16th March 2023

CHAIR: Councillor Michelle Simmons-Safo

Signed by Chair

Date