

Minutes of the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel 28th January 2014

Present: Cllr Alexander, Cllr McNamara (Chair) and Cllr Weber

In attendance: Cllr Ejiofor, Daliah Barrett (Haringey Council), Michael Kelleher (Haringey Council) and Michael Kelly (Haringey Council), Clif Osborne (Trust for Conservation Volunteers) and Chris Speirs (Trust for Conservation Volunteers).

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Bull, Cllr Bloch and Cllr Gibson.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 None received.

3. Deputations

3.1 None received.

4. Trust for Conservation Volunteers

4.1 Officers from the Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV) gave a presentation to the panel on the work of the organisation in Haringey. The panel noted the vision and the purpose of TCV was:

- VISION- An abundance of safe and accessible outdoor places for everyone to use and enjoy
- PURPOSE-Work together with people and communities to transform their health, prospects and outdoor places for the long term.

4.2 The panel noted that TCV work in a number of different settings and with a range of local groups to support socioeconomic and environmental regeneration across the borough. TCV works closely with Green Flag parks and support the creation of a Conservation Action Plan (a project management plan for environmental improvement) in each. This is a new model for the management of the parks to help facilitate local involvement, develop local partnerships and improve accountability.

4.3 The panel noted that TCV was currently working across 20 sites in Haringey of varying size and with different community emphasis. These included:

- Board walk construction at Coldfall Woods;
- Removing a fallen holly at Queens Woods;
- Wildflower bed creation and pond clearance;
- Creating homes for Wildlife.

4.4 A key aim of the approach of TCV is to recruit local volunteers and to support them in local environmental projects. The panel noted that TCV recruit Haringey volunteers that in total worked over 1,241 workdays had been completed by volunteers to date. It was estimated that this was of a net value of £80,990.

4.5 The panel noted that TCV also undertakes education projects with both young people and adults. Here it was noted that at the Railway Fields site in Harringay:

- 20 different school groups had received educational input;
- 1,327 children studied environmental education topics;
- An adult education programme is supported.

4.6 TCV works with local groups to support environmental projects particularly local Friends of Parks groups, which offer an important link to local residents associations and other local residents. TCV offers free training and support to local FoP groups which aims to develop skills, knowledge and confidence to undertake local environmental work.

4.7 The panel noted that in the restructuring of environmental support In Haringey, TCV funding was reduced from £130k to £50k, which has consequently reduced its capacity to support local environmental projects. The panel noted that for every £1 of funding received by TCV. More than £2 is received back in terms of hours supplied by volunteer. TCV also brings in additional funding through other bids and partnerships.

Green Gym

4.8 TCV also support the Green Gym initiative which is a programme to help improve the physical activity and mental health of those referred. The panel noted that participants can be referred by health services or via self-referral to 3 hour sessions based in local green spaces. There are 14 Green Gyms across London, 3 of which are in Haringey including Broadwater Farm. The panel noted that TCV were also offering a Blue Gym programme for environmental work focused on waterways. In Haringey, the Green Gym had also helped to support:

- Intergenerational projects
- Learning Disability/ Mental Health Service users
- Those with Drug and Alcohol problems (DASH).

4.9 The panel noted that TCV are trialling the Green Gym model with youth offending services in Lewisham and Greenwich and if successful would like to extend this work further to other Local Authorities. This would take time to develop links and further funding opportunities.

Agreed: that details of local YOS would be given to TCV to explore possible opportunities for the Green GYM in Haringey.

4.10 The panel noted that evaluations of the Green Gym had demonstrated the following outcomes:

- Improved Wellbeing ;
- Improved Physical Health;
- Pro-Environmental Behaviour;
- Individual and Community Resilience ;
- Improved quality Green Spaces.

4.11 The panel suggested that given the health benefits derived from this work, it would be practical to approach Public Health to identify opportunities for possible partnerships and or joint working opportunities.

Agreed: That scrutiny would contact Public Health to identify a contact link between these two services.

4.12 The panel noted that whilst TCV had a strong track record of involving local community groups in small neglected areas of green space and pocket parks and was interested in working with local communities, there was no capacity to support additional work at present in Haringey. The panel noted that historically, the TCV was funded for local community development but this ceased in the most recent restructure.

4.13 The panel noted that other boroughs (Harrow) had created a 'Green Grid' that underpinned planning development which acted as a tool through which to engage developers in support of local environmental projects. Contributions were used to support the development of green infrastructure across this borough.

Agreed: that Planning Service would meet with representatives from Leisure Client Services to ascertain possible opportunities to develop and support environmental projects through planning development (CIL).

4.14 The panel also suggested that further work could be undertaken with housing providers within the borough (both Homes for Haringey and other registered housing providers), who may also have small pockets green space which could be developed through TCV.

4.15 The panel noted that significant potential of the model used by TCV and suggested that a Community Environmental Conference is organised to help link the following, new volunteers, the identification of undeveloped or neglected green spaces; new funding opportunities. It was suggested that each ward could nominate 10 areas of neglected green space which could be taken forward for development. This would need to link to Green Conference.

Agreed: that the possibility of supporting a Community Environmental Conference is explored Client Services Team with the aim of bringing interested local stakeholders together to assist in the identification of neglected green-spaces, volunteers and funding opportunities.

5. Cabinet Q and A

5.1 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement attended to respond to questions from the panel on services within his portfolio which has four main strands:

- Planning applications;
- Planning and licensing policy;
- Planning and licensing Enforcement;
- Housing with Multiple Occupancy.

Planning Enforcement

5.2 The panel noted a number of local case studies in which unauthorised development was perceived to have gone unchecked by the planning authority. The perceived lack of action taken by the planning authority was felt to undermine confidence in local

planning enforcement processes and future compliance with planning regulations. The panel noted that there were a number of contributory factors:

- An information gap within the community about what is permitted development and what needs planning authority authorisation;
- The exploitation of planning processes (e.g. retrospective applications, appeals, certificates of lawfulness).

5.3 It was noted by the panel that Planning Officers had been specifically tasked to look at planning enforcement to ensure that the appropriate authorisations are communicated to applicants at each stage of the planning process and that there was a much clearer understanding within the community about what is permitted development.

5.4 The panel noted that there would be a more robust planning enforcement response in the future to help restore greater confidence in the system. This would include the following:

- A tasking group to undertake a visible manifestation of physical enforcement;
- Prioritisation of planning enforcement cases, which will be supported by;
- Direct action (where necessary) by the Council to uphold enforcement decisions.

5.5 It was hoped that the above would send a clear message to those developers seeking to exploit planning processes that the Council would not be a 'soft touch' and that enforcement will be a priority.

5.6 It was important to note that planning enforcement relied on intelligence and reports from within the community and that where planning breaches were identified or suspected, these should be reported promptly to the planning service.

5.7 The panel noted that there had been an increase in unauthorised living in employment areas. Further investment in planning, housing and legal support to address this issue had been approved in budget proposals for 2014/15.

Planning Performance (Development Management Improvement Programme (DMIP))

5.8 The panel noted the improved performance for strands within the Development Management Improvement Programme (DMIP). The panel noted that regular updates on the implementation of recommendations within this report were regularly provided to Regulatory Committee.

Site Allocation Plan Document and Tottenham Area Action Plan

5.9 The panel noted that these documents provide a framework for the future regeneration and development of the borough. Both documents identify potential strategic sites and suggest what form development may take. The consultation opened on 17th January and local residents, business and other local stakeholders would be invited to respond. Both documents are subject to consultation and the plans for each will go to every Area Forum.

5.10 The panel noted that there was a target of developing 1,500 homes per annum which would be challenging given the pressures for possible redevelopment sites and inability to build upward. Both plans, once agreed, will provide a clearer framework for potential developers to engage with the authority.

5.11 the panel noted that potential sites were identified through a number of processes including:

- A 'call for sites' advert to local landowners wishing to develop;
- Greater London Assembly;
- Neighbourhood Plans.

5.12 The panel also noted that there is a strategic development monthly meeting at which the Cabinet member is kept up to date with all major planning applications. Within the meeting a member takes the role of design champion, and the meeting is also looking to develop a role of 'heritage champion' to further promote sympathetic development.

5.13 The panel underlined the importance of community engagement and involvement in the local planning processes. It was suggested that many small developments could be implemented to encourage and support community engagement and build confidence for involvement. It was suggested that a summary of the impact of public engagement should be included within planning reports, as this would provide evidence as to how consultation processes had influenced decisions within the final planning policy or development. This would provide reassurance to members of the public that time taken to be involved within the consultation had been worthwhile and encourage further involvement in the future.

Agreed: that a mechanism should be developed in which the impact of public consultations is recorded on final planning documents (for Community Engagement with Planning Project).

Licensing Applications

5.14 The panel were made aware that all licensing applications received required the following publication:

- All applications would be sent to statutory consultees (fire, police, enforcement, building control, CYP service etc);
- Are displayed on the website
- Applicant is required to notify local newspaper and put an appropriate sign outside the premises.

Event Planning

5.15 The panel noted that two licenses have been granted for events at Finsbury Park which take place in May and July respectively and an events plan is being developed for each. As a result of the scrutiny call-in process, a Finsbury Park Stakeholders group has been established to assist with plans, communications and liaison. The group has identified community representatives and held its first meeting.

6. Draft Partnership Agreement – Housing Enablement Service.

6.1 Officers from the Housing Enablement Team presented the draft Partnership Agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to establish a framework to ensure consistency in how providers deliver new housing, make allocations and manage their stock to ensure that they meet local needs. The Council does not have any regulatory authority over registered providers, and the agreement is voluntary.

- 6.2 The panel noted that as a result of earlier scrutiny, the role of elected members had been developed within the partnership agreement with local registered housing providers. Similar additions have included:
- New requirement for 12 month programme of estate inspections;
 - A commitment to develop a stock rationalisation policy;
 - The provision of performance data to the Council;
 - A new role for scrutiny in addressing poor performance.
- 6.3 It was noted that the Homes and Community Agency is the sole regulator of registered housing providers. The HCA replaced the Tenants Service Authority as regulator and now provides 'back stop' regulation, the expectation being that local stakeholders will play a more active role in regulation (of tenants issues) with the HCA only becoming involved in serious concerns relating to governance and financial viability.
- 6.4 The final consultation document and Partnership Agreement will be sent to all Chairs and Boards of registered providers which own or manage housing stock in Haringey. Based on previous agreements, it is expected that 90% of providers will sign up to the new agreement.

7. Update on strategic enforcement

- 7.1 The panel noted that an evidence gathering session was held with officers from representing corporate services (Communications, Audit and IT). A further two evidence sessions were planned for:
- Other Local Authorities
 - Local partners – Fire Service & Police

8. Update on Community Engagement with Planning

- 8.1 It was noted that an evidence gathering session had been held with officers from both the Development Management and Planning Policy teams to ascertain local policy and practice for community engagement and involvement. A further two evidence sessions were planned:
- Comparative policy and practice – Planning Advisory Service, Planning Aid for London and Islington and Camden Councils.
 - Community involvement – a consultative session with local community groups to feedback on their experience within local planning consultations.

