

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE ACTION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2024

**MEMBERS:** Councillors: Hivran Dalkaya (Chair), Nia Stevens (Vice Chair), Maria Alexandrou, Ahmet Hasan, Mohammad Islam, Destiny Karakus, Joanne Laban, and Elisa Morreale.

**Officers:** Gideon Whittingham (Planning Decisions Manager), Karen Page (Head of Planning and Building Control), Richard Eason (Programme Director, Journeys & Places), Chris Cole (Head of Strategic Transport Planning & Policy), Ned Johnson (Principal Officer Pollution), Perry Scott (Executive Director for Environment & Communities), and Harry Blake-Herbert (Governance Officer).

**Also Attending:** Cllr Rick Jewell (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Cllr Susan Erbil (Cabinet Member for Licensing, Planning & Regulatory Services), and members of the public.

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Patricia Gregory, who was substituted by Cllr Elisa Morreale.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received regarding any item on the agenda.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the previous Environment & Climate Action Scrutiny Panel meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2024.

### 4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Gideon Whittingham introduced and highlighted the key aspects of the report, including but not limited to: the change in legislation, its impact on planning applications, the work being done by officers in preparation of its implementation, and its context amongst existing policies and legislation.

In response to Members queries regarding mechanisms for increasing biodiversity and high value sites, officers advised that planting trees, green roofs and walls, and features which encouraged certain insects and wildlife, were all techniques for improving biodiversity at a site. Specialists would

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identify what was appropriate for specific locations, and high value sites had not been identified in Enfield, but Cheryll Wilson would be looking at this.

In response to Members' questions and comments relating to the emerging Local Plan and addressing natural recovery, officers responded that nature recovery strategies were looked after by a team, and dealt with specific sites that could receive money to provide biodiversity net gains. Such strategies were described as related but adjacent to biodiversity net gain. The emerging Local Plan sought 20% biodiversity net gain. It was evidence based that Enfield should seek 20% from all developments, but this would not be a material consideration until the plan was approved. Other boroughs like Sutton, had targeted and achieved 20% net gain for some time, and officers felt that having this target would empower Enfield to actively seek more innovative solutions.

In response to Members' enquiries regarding Vicarage Farm, officers replied that it was a misconception that green fields equated to high biodiversity value, that the base line of such areas was relatively low, thus it would be very much achievable for regeneration schemes to introduce quality biodiversity improvements. Cllr Erbil highlighted the importance of understanding what was meant by biodiversity net gain and looking at sites on a case-by-case basis.

In response to Members' questions relating to the options/ mechanisms available, officers advised that providing the biodiversity net gain on-site was the priority, and what officers would expect and push for. If it was demonstrated that an on-site provision could not be achieved, then offsite net gains would be accepted. If offsite biodiversity gains could not be achieved, there was a credit system for buying biodiversity net gain in the region, but this would be a last resort. Applicants would need to demonstrate a robust justification which officers would scrutinise before offsite and credit contributions were accepted. Cheryll Wilson was dealing with offsite developments, and there was an opportunity for landowners to service this. Cllr Erbil highlighted that the credit system would only allow for relatively local contributions.

In response to Members queries relating to the DEFRA assessment, officers responded that DEFRA set a metric, which was treated as a baseline. Applications/ sites were assessed against it, to calculate the 10% improvement, and how these units could be provided. There was a software service available for conducting this assessment, but the council had the in-house specialisms to do this themselves too.

The Panel AGREED to note the report outlining how Biodiversity Net Gain will be processed by Development Management in Enfield.

### **5. QUIETER NEIGHBOURHOODS - WALKING & CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE**

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Richard Eason introduced and highlighted the key aspects of the report, including but not limited to: the process and phases of consultations which had taken place for various projects, the platforms and methods used to communicate with residents, and engagements with a disability focus/ reference group.

In response to Members' questions and comments regarding resident feedback from consultations, officers replied that resident engagement was listened to and did impact on projects. A Fox Lane scheme was given as an example where the means of achieving the projects outcomes which taken forward were altered following consultation. Officers expressed that consultations were a mechanism for gathering views rather than a public vote, and residents' comments had to be balanced/ weighed against opposing views and other factors. They explained that at phase 2 of engagement, data was collected in order to better understand the demographic of those engaging, and listening to the views of those with protected characteristics, such as disabilities, was very important to them. Some schemes were inevitably going to be controversial, and benefit some people more than others, but no scheme was designed to inconvenience anyone. Officers added that they could provide Members with maps relating to individual projects if requested.

In response to Members' enquiries relating to statistics and engagement with overlooked groups, officers advised that within their equality impact assessments for all projects, the impact of schemes on individuals with protected characteristics were considered, as was their legal duty. Residents who may be overlooked by this were encouraged, like anyone else, to engage in the consultations and share their views. If there were people being overlooked when projects were considered, then officers could pick this up. Officers said that they were transparent in their break down of engagement statistics, and were doing more than they were required to do, particularly when trying to balance their resources.

In response to Members' questions regarding a Ponders End to Enfield Town scheme, officers responded that there had been lots of engagement; officers had supported ward councillor meetings on the project, and feedback was taken into account. Cllr Jewell clarified that there had been concern and confusion with road improvements as part of the scheme, which were currently being looked at again. Officers added that they would continue to reflect on how they could communicate complex interventions clearly so that they would not be misunderstood.

In response to Members queries regarding obesity, officers replied that such studies were an issue for Public Health colleagues, but the integration of active travel into residents' lives where possible, particularly young people, would help to address the issue. Cllr Jewell expressed that walking and cycling projects were all intended to encourage parents and children to pursue active travel when attending school, with another three school streets having been announced recently. Officers would speak to colleagues in Education and Public Health about initiatives to better encourage active travel in schools,

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such as getting children to walk around the playground before school, and the benefits of this were highlighted.

In response to Members' questions and comments relating to the impact of quieter neighbourhoods on active travel, officers advised that long term data collection was needed and underway, but more time was needed. The installation of more permanent continuous counting locations to monitor the number of people walking and cycling in different areas was being looked at. More broadly across the country, data supported that the benefit/cost ratio for investment in active travel was high.

In response to Members' enquiries regarding bike hangers at train stations, officers responded that there were hubs at Enfield Town and Edmonton Green; they were working on designs for hubs at other stations before seeking funding, and they were encouraging developers to contribute to multi-modal journeys.

A member of the public asked about street cleaning and planting of more trees along streets, to which officers and Cllr Jewell said there were over 25,000 trees in Enfield's streets and that if trees were removed to facilitate off street parking, they were replaced. As part of a transport strategy currently being consulted on, and a walking action plan, a healthy street approach and improvements were being pursued, which would involve cleaning and planting.

The Panel AGREED to note the report which provided information on consultations that had taken place for Quieter Neighbourhoods and walking & cycling infrastructure.

### **6. AIR QUALITY/POLLUTION & ULEZ**

Ned Johnson introduced and highlighted the key aspects of the report, including but not limited to: the impact of the ultra-low emission zone, compliance standards, and monitoring data/ statistics.

In response to Members' questions relating to data, officers replied that 12 months' worth of data, up to September next year, would be needed for robustness. This was due to variances in the data as a result of exogenous factors such as weather. There were four real time, continuous, automatic monitoring sites in the borough measuring nitrogen dioxide, and one particulate monitor, which were strategically placed and had been there long before the ULEZ expansion. Members expressed that an update on this item should be considered in next year's work programme.

In response to Members queries relating to the impact of the expansion on the council, officers advised that they were ensuring that their vehicles/ fleet were compliant and installing electric vehicle charging points, but the scheme was led by the Mayor of London and implemented through TFL.

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In response to Members' questions and comments regarding how limits were set, officers responded that ULEZ was based on vehicle emission standards set by Europe which manufacturers worked towards, with higher Euro standard numbers reflecting lower emissions.

In response to Members' enquiries relating to other air quality impactors, officers replied that as vehicle technology had improved, the proportion of emissions from travel had reduced; with building emissions, such as gas boilers, becoming larger influencers. The council's air quality action plan set out what it was doing to improve air quality.

In response to Members' questions regarding EV charging points and LTNs, officers advised that proportionately the increase in concentration of cars on main roads as a result of LTNs was relatively low. In the case of Bowes Primary, the introduction of a green wall between the A406 and the school had reduced nitrogen dioxide by 22%, and the extension of the green wall and addition of a school street, for better protection were being looked at. Cllr Jewell said they were going through a process to tender 1,000 lamppost chargers and 17 rapid electric vehicle chargers for the borough this year, but legislative hurdles had held up this procurement.

In response to Members queries regarding the reduction in capital spending and the electric fleet, Cllr Jewell and officers responded that electric vehicles were being procured as part of the capital programme, but there was a challenge in that manufacturers were not producing electric versions of all types of the vehicles the council used. A waste truck recently lost to a fire was as a result of incorrectly discarded waste; but the vehicles had extinguisher systems.

A member of the public asked about adding more emission monitors, to which officers said there was a difference between passive and automatic monitors, and Enfield had more automatic sites than most other similar boroughs. As part of their strategic monitoring, they would be putting in air quality sensors around school streets, which would provide more relative data; and there were 22 diffusion/ sampling tubes in the borough already.

The Panel AGREED to note the report detailing the impact of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone expansion.

### **7. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Members noted the Environment & Climate Action Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2023/24.

### **8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted the dates of future meetings as set out in the agenda.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their time and contributions and the meeting ended at 20:39.