

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT, PARKS & LEISURE  
SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2009**

**COUNCILLORS**

**PRESENT** Martin Prescott (Chairman), Yasemin Brett, Annette Dreblow, Norman Ford, Donald McGowan and Geoffrey Robinson

**ABSENT** Chris Bond, Adrian Croshaw and Terence Smith

**OFFICERS:** Mike Ahuja (Head of Corporate Scrutiny Services), Andy Ellis (Corporate Scrutiny Services), Sue Foster (Director of Place Shaping and Enterprise), Alan Freeman (Interim Head of Parks and Open Spaces), Lovelace Poku (Planning Policy Officer) and Shirley Scott (Partnership and Outreach Services Manager) Penelope Williams (Secretary)

**Also Attending:** Councillor Michael Lavender (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Enterprise) and approximately 50 members of the public.

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**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Prescott welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Croshaw and Bond and for lateness from Councillor Brett.

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**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Robinson declared a personal interest in Item 3, Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, as a member of the Friends of Tatem Park.

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**PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY**

The panel received a report and presentation on the new draft parks and open spaces strategy.

Councillor Lavender, Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Enterprise, introduced the strategy, giving some background information.

- He felt that in the past there had been too many strategies and not enough actions.
- He had wanted this strategy to be a thin veneer which could be underpinned by a complementary budget and action plan.

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- Consultants had recently been employed to provide this: but the document they had produced was not fit for his purpose. It was too academic and not specific enough to Enfield. Some of their work, however had been used to inform the new strategy.
- This strategy had started with a blank sheet, involving individuals from the Friends of the Parks Groups and other interested organizations. .
- All types of open space have been included, other than private gardens, public squares and streetscape.
- The budget and action plan should enable works to start soon.

### 1. Presentation of the Strategy Report

Sue Foster, Director of Place Shaping and Enterprise, gave the presentation to the panel. Copies of the slides are available on the Council website or from the Scrutiny Secretary. Key points are as follows: -

- This was a 10 year strategy, the vision and key objectives, with a delivery plan. An action plan would be added later listing specific projects.
- Parks and open spaces were a valuable asset with huge potential.
- The strategy was being looked at pre consultation, before being considered by Cabinet. Any comments made at the scrutiny panel would be included in the Cabinet report. Cabinet would be considering their report in November. The final strategy will go to Council next year.
- The context for the strategy was planning policy guidance PPG 17, dealing with parks and open spaces. This included the whole range of open space to be managed for public enjoyment.
- It was important to protect open space.
- Officers were working on the strategy with a small working group looking at national and regional best practice.
- The strategy was a high level vision which would inform the overall corporate vision and sits within the wider place shaping agenda – the aim of which is to improve the quality of neighbourhoods. The strategy would be targeted and focussed, picking up what was distinctive and particular to Enfield, to find ways of getting the best out of what we have.
- Actions would be prioritised and resources allocated. It was also hoped to pull in external funding to enable additional investment.
- The strategy had 4 key objectives. Open spaces should be places for everyone. They had a role to play in the safety and continuing health

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of the community, for events and as cultural amenities, as play grounds, providing for other social activities and facilities.

- Open spaces should be delivered in partnership, using a shared vision. The input of partners was invaluable.
- Taking account of sustainability and respect for heritage. The parks and open spaces should be fit for purpose for today and in the future. Climate change, enhancing economic prosperity and energy efficiency were key.
- To protect and manage their great quality and diversity, maintaining and protecting heritage.
- The delivery plan is led by the key objectives. Some were high level and aspirational and could only be implemented when funding streams became available.
- The action plan would be more focussed. All projects would be resourced and closely monitored: there would be specific projects for specific parks.
- There are a range of ways to become involved in the consultation. Once the strategy has been approved by Cabinet there would be an 8 week consultation period. In early spring 2010, the strategy would be redrafted incorporating the responses. It would then come back to the Scrutiny Panel in March, and be finally published in the summer 2010.

Officers around the table introduced themselves:-`

Shirley Scott, Partnership and Outreach Services Manager for Parks, said

- She has been working in Enfield for many years mainly in the voluntary sector and in the Council for five years and within the Parks Service for the past two years.
- During that two year period the number of friends of parks groups had increased from 8 to 21 with a waiting list of 2.
- Successful fund raising efforts had resulted in money for Broomfield Park, Florence Hayes Fields and a project on the Holmesdale Tunnel in partnership with Highway Services and Broxbourne Council via an access to nature fund.
- Her job also involves managing the Parks Outreach Team and Enfield in Bloom.

Alan Freeman, Interim Head of Parks, started with the council at the end of May 2009, and had been working with Lovelace Poku on putting the strategy together.

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Lovelace Poku was a Planning Policy Officer, whose job it was to produce a strategy in liaison with the other officers and work closely with the Working Group on shaping the document.

### **2. Questions/comments/issues raised**

- 2.1** Donald Alexander (Friends of Trent Park), although he welcomed the document, felt that there had been too many strategies and that the current one was too ambitious. Not enough account had been paid to the work carried out by the conservation area committees. The Trent Park Conservation Committee had carried out a comprehensive appraisal had been carried out on Trent Park and produced the management plan which had enabled the park to be awarded a green flag, which was subsequently lost because of the council's poor upkeep.
- 2.2** Conservation groups should be acknowledged and consulted as active partners.
- 2.3** Concern was expressed that Trent Park, which is as big as all the other parks put together, the most varied and most beautiful, had not been mentioned in the documents. It was felt that this showed a lack of pride and ambition. With more attention it was felt that this country park could become a regional destination park. There was also a strategic opportunity to upgrade the park, particularly in the light of Middlesex University's possible plan to move. Close liaison with the university should take place.
- 2.4** The consultation document had been issued late which meant that there was not enough time to read it before the meeting. Councillor Lavender apologised for the delay which he said had been caused by him. There would however be many opportunities to comment on it.
- 2.5** The council recommended in its Statement of Community Involvement that community consultations should last at least 12 weeks.
- 2.6** Some were confused about the status of greens such as Palmers Green, Southgate Green and Winchmore Hill Green.
- 2.7** In the light of the commitment to making open spaces accessible to all, concern was expressed about delay in the provision of the disabled footpath at Forty Hall, which would enable elderly and other people to reach the fishing lakes more easily.
- 2.8** Management plans for parks such as Craig Park should not be delayed because of the strategy. Management plans for several of the parks were already in place, others were being prepared. Only the larger parks and open spaces would have individual plans others would have more generic plans.

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- 2.9** Consultation on the strategy would be discussed at all the area forums.
- 2.10** Many felt that the maintenance of the parks was the key issue. It was most important that parks should be well managed and well looked after. The majority of the money available should be spent on maintenance.
- 2.11** Concern was expressed about the state of Broomfield House which had been neglected for many years, breaking covenants. A source of funds had been identified and a plan for rebuilding the house, complying with the covenants with a degree of public access was in place
- 2.12** A promise had been made to the refurbish the conservatory that housed a banana tree at Broomfield House and to restore a listed wall and the sensory garden. This work will start shortly.
- 2.13** It was regretted that there had been no consultation with local residents and interest groups on the proposals for the conservatory.
- 2.14** Councillor Lavender said that the council no longer had the funds to run the parks service as it had been run in the past. He admitted that recently parks had not been a top priority, but now the council was committed to re-examining what they were doing and prioritising the available funds.
- 2.15** Concern was expressed about who was to do all the actions in the delivery plan. It was felt that too much was expected of voluntary workers.
- 2.16** Some felt that too much attention had been paid to the six parks with the green flag status and not enough on the others. The money spent on bringing these parks up to the standard could have been spread more fairly. The Council received no financial reward for achieving green park status but it was pointed out that awards, such as Green Flag, can help to justify external funding bids.
- 2.17** Councillor Lavender said that the aim of the exercise was to establish the parks' functions and facilities and to decide what we can afford to maintain. Parks performed different functions for different sections of the community.
- 2.18** The Green Belt was protected under separate planning policy, namely Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG 2). There was concern about buildings such as the large new building on the Broxbourne side of the Borough boundary by the M25. It was felt that this should be spelt out in the policy more explicitly. More information would be added to the minutes.

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- 2.19** Council officers explained that the Green Belt is a planning tool to stop the encroachment on buildings onto the open land. The Borough's Green Belt policy would be carried through by the Council's emerging Core Strategy which would have statutory weight. As such it would not be need to be included in the parks and open spaces strategy.
- 2.20** Concern was expressed about the plans for future management of works that had been funded as capital projects.
- 2.21** It was felt that there should be wider engagement, beyond the friends of the parks groups, at a more strategic level. Use of the Enfield Community Empowerment Network would be made. Shirley Scott reported that there was a London wide Friends of the Parks Network who were holding a conference at Broadwater Farm that weekend.
- 2.22** Works recently carried out at Trent Park included refurbishment of the toilets, restoration of the blind trail, and provision of the new tea room in the Animal Sanctuary, but much more work was needed, including on the water gardens. It was felt that the Council should match any funds granted by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 2.23** There was no mention of the Trent Park Heritage Centre in the action plan.
- 2.24** Members of the public felt that more cafes and toilets were needed in several parks including Hillyfields. Sue Foster responded that these were covered in Strategic Objective 9.10 Amenities for Everyone. The detail explaining how this objective would be delivered would be included in the Action Plan.
- 2.25** Peter Armstrong, Friends of Jubilee Park, felt that more was needed to be done to address the needs of parks as a whole. He was tired of bidding wars. He also thought that water provision should be bought back into parks and that public parks needed to be more colourful in the use of plants and shrubs.
- 2.26** Parks needed to be safer places. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the parks police unit which had replaced the previous park ranger service. Parks Police activities were regulated by laws and byelaws. Councillor Lavender said that the consultation would consider different ways to address any inadequacies of this service. There were strengths and weaknesses in the two alternatives and he welcomed any thoughts from the public.
- 2.27** Some felt that more detail was required on the bio diversity strategy described in 9.17. Sue Foster reported that a bio diversity officer was

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included in the new place shaping staffing structure, whose job it would be to produce and adopt a bio diversity plan for the borough.

- 2.28** More thought should also be given to the parks settings and making them more accessible. Main roads such as Aldermans Hill, often created barriers because of fast moving traffic, making access to the parks difficult.
- 2.29** More attractive parks would improve the footfall. Mr Bushell, a friend of Enfield Playing Fields, raised the issue of byelaws restricting the driving of golf balls in parks.
- 2.30** Access for emergency vehicles should be considered. Keys were held by the fire brigade, but not always by the ambulance service. Helicopter landing points were also a consideration.
- 2.31** Concern was expressed about the proposed cycle route through Hillyfields Park which was felt would be dangerous on account of the parks' steep slopes. Cycle routes through flatter parks were thought to be more appropriate.
- 2.32** Bridleways were not mentioned in the strategy. Some thought that a bridleway linking those in Whitewebbs and Trent Park would be beneficial.
- 2.33** More co-operation was needed with local schools. Raynham School Farm had recently been vandalised twice but had received no help from the council.
- 2.34** Serious consideration should be given to increasing the number of park outreach workers. There were currently only 3 covering 21 parks. An external funding application had recently been made to increase this number by one. Others said that the numbers and calibre of the staff overall should be increased.
- 2.35** More events such as dramas and small scale community gatherings /festivals should be encouraged.
- 2.36** More consideration should also be given to other green areas such as cemeteries, churchyards, playing fields, green corridors and other discrete areas.
- 2.37** No one vision was favoured above another. All four made up the council's comprehensive package.
- 2.38** Delivering economic prosperity in parks can be achieved through job creation and micro businesses. Parks have a role to play in place shaping; they provide an opportunity for businesses to flourish. Buildings can provide space for cafes and other small businesses. Events in parks can also be an economic driver.

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Several successful job creation schemes have been set up recently, including the Summer Work Out. An area in Gough Park on Clay Hill had been cleared by young people who had been paid for the work experience. Several of these young people had gone on to get permanent work in the Lea Valley Park and others, apprenticeships. Pitch and Putt in Oakwood Park, run by a private organisation, was another example.

Councillor Prescott thanked Councillor Lavender and the officers for attending the meeting. He also thanked all the members of the audience for their contributions, emphasising how important it was that they should come along to have their voice heard.

### **AGREED that**

1. Any questions left unanswered tonight would be addressed and included with the minutes.
2. People were invited to send any other questions or comments they wished to make to Penelope Williams, Scrutiny Secretary, by the week ending 16 October 2009.
3. All comments and questions raised would be considered as part of the final consultation document.

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#### **UPDATE FROM FRIENDS OF THE PARKS WORKING GROUP**

Andy Ellis, Scrutiny Support Officer, updated the panel on the work of the Friends of the Parks Working Group.

He reported that the working group were looking to create a friends of parks forum for all friends of parks groups in the borough, examining best practice in other boroughs.

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#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2009**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

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#### **WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

The panel received and noted the changes to the work programme 2009/10.

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#### **ITEMS TO BE REFERRED TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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There were no items to be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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**ITEMS TO BE REFERRED TO CABINET**

There were no items to be referred to Cabinet

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**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The panel noted the dates agreed for future meetings: -

- Wednesday 2 December 2009
- Monday 1 February 2010
- Monday 19 April 2010

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**APPENDIX A**

**Environment, Parks and Leisure Scrutiny Panel – 6 October 2009**

**Parks and Open Spaces Strategy – Questions raised**

**1. Questions from the minutes**

1.1 Why has Trent Park not been given a higher profile in the report?

This comment will be logged as a representation to the consultation and will be considered as part of the post consultation review.

1.2 Why is an 8 week consultation period proposed when the council recommends 12 weeks?

The Council will be consulting on the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for a period of 12 weeks.

1.3 What is the status of the greens such as Southgate or Winchmore Hill Green?

These are both pieces of Highway land and are not managed by the Parks and Open Spaces Service. Sites such as these, however, will be covered by the Strategy. We will make this explicit in the revised document.

1.4 What is happening about the provision of the disabled footpath at Forty Hall?

The outcome of a Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) and other proposed projects at Forty Hall are subject to an application. An 'in principle' decision from HLF is expected in December 2009 however, the final outcome will not be known until January or February. If the application is successful, the Council would seek to bring this project forward in Spring 2010.

1.5 When will the management plan for Craig Park be available?

It is expected that a management plan will be in place within the next three years.

1.6 Where are the two private allotments?

Chalkwell Park Avenue Allotment site is situated in Enfield Town and is owned by Thames Water. Greenway Allotment site is situated in the Palmers Green area (near Bourne Avenue, Mead Way and Park Way) and is held in the ownership of a number of individuals. The site is largely overgrown and is close to the Council's Bourne Allotment site.

1.7 What is the relationship of the green belt policy to the strategy?

The Green Belt is a planning tool to stop the encroachment of buildings onto the open land. The Borough's Green Belt policy will be carried through by the Council's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, which would have the statutory weight necessary to prevent development on open land designated as Green Belt. As such, it would not need to be included in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, as it would not offer any protection additional to that provided by the LDF.

**2. Questions from Corporate Scrutiny**

2.1 What form will the consultation take?

The consultation will be multi-faceted with letters being sent to local resident groups, friends of parks groups and conservation area groups. Officers will attend Area Forums and channel a number of consultation events through the ECEN network. Schools and youth organisations will be contacted to engage in particular events. Consultation material will be available in all major parks.

2.2 How was the Working Group, mentioned at the meeting and in the report, established and will its work continue?

The Working Group was established through a broadly representative selection of people who were involved with another group of their own, or who had a particular interest in parks. The membership ranges from friends of parks groups, local organisations, parents, leaseholders and officers. The Working Group has a remit to continue up until adoption of the strategy.

2.3 What has been established from the Atkins and Cracknell work?

There is now a much clearer view of how much open space there is, what type, its condition, usage and where there may be opportunities for improving open space in the future. It also gives a very clear indication of whether we have the right facilities to cater for our communities. Both documents have provided standards to ensure that, if opportunities arise, we are in the best possible position to make informed decisions about land acquisition and disposal.

2.4 How can parks and open spaces reduce poverty?

Parks and open spaces have a key role to play in our Place Shaping Agenda and in particular to improve quality of life and help to address deprivation through economic development initiatives. The Council has in place a number of apprenticeships to help and encourage young people into horticulture. Opportunities will be given to micro businesses (e.g. Ice cream vans, Cafes etc) to operate in the parks. Rather than spending money on a gym membership, selected parks will have green gyms, which anyone can go along to and use for free. Enfield has one of the highest numbers of allotments in London and will continue to maintain this position by seeking

more and improving existing allotments. This will help residents grow their own food.

### **3. Questions/comments from members of the public**

**3.1 Pamela Carroll** – Parks are well equipped for the under 10s but not for older children, she suggests a skateboard area for Oakwood Park, a review of facilities at Boxers Lake Park and carrying out a survey of local school children asking them what they would like to see in their parks.

Comments noted. Older children will have particular focus in the strategy. The 3-yearly rolling action plan will include provision for BMX track, new skateboard area and 2 x new adiZones in the Borough to encourage young people to be more active in their local park.

**3.2 Harriet Albert** – Protect parks from developers, replace trees when they die, ensure children's play areas are not tucked away in corners of the parks, ensure facilities are maintained in all parks not just show parks. Felt that the playground in Arnos Park was in poor repair.

Comments noted. All areas of open space are protected by National, Regional and Enfield planning policy. There is a strict policy to protect open space from building development. With regard to Arnos Park, the playground will be completely remodelled and moved to a more open and visual area of Arnos Park. The playground will include elements of 'natural play' that is being delivered through the Play Pathfinder programme.

**3.3 Suzannah Yianni** – Issues in Tucker's Park, North Enfield Rec, due to play pathfinders development – would prefer rubber flooring to wood chips in the play area, felt that the grass area is unsafe, and that the pathfinders scheme attracts older youths and anti social behaviour. She would like the play pathfinder equipment to be moved away from the younger children's play area, repairs and redevelopment of the younger children's area and the provision of toilets and refreshments.

Comments noted. Further resources are allocated to deal with some of the problems in the park. The Council is unable to site the play pathfinder equipment elsewhere within the park, but consultation is taking place on alterations to the installation, including the choice of material used for safer surfacing.

### **3.4 Douglas Coker** – Enfield Green Party

What is the place of climate change considerations in the document? – There is a need to highlight a specific function for parks and open spaces in respect of climate change. – Also interested in food strategy.

Comments noted. Climate change is important and further consideration will be given in the revised document. The Council already adopts a sustainable planting programme that involves indigenous plants. This attracts insects and

in turn other wildlife into our Parks and Open Spaces The draft Strategy has put in place the consideration to the planting orchards to enforce the importance of growing fruit and vegetables locally. Comments regarding the Food Strategy have been passed to the relevant officer who will contact Mr Coker.

**3.5 Andy Barker** – Chairman Fox Lane and District Residents Association

Consultation should be longer than 8 weeks and should take account of people's preoccupation with Christmas at this time of year.

The consultation period has been extended to 12 weeks.

Encouraging more people to use parks would make them more secure.

Agree. A marketing and communications strategy will be produced to encourage more people to use their local park.

Consideration should also be given to using underutilised space in parks for allotments and community farms. He felt that vast areas of mown grass do little for the environment or to encourage wildlife.

The Council has already identified sites that may be suitable to be turned into allotment sites. The Council will also carry out a Borough-wide audit to assess the stock of open space and the feasibility of changing its function. However, it is the primary aim of this strategy that open space will not be lost to development and that the open space will continue to serve local community needs.