

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE ACTION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu, Daniel Anderson, Chinelo Anyanwu, Susan Erbil, Charith Gunawardena, Lindsay Rawlings, Andrew Thorp and Hass Yusuf

Officers: Ian Russell (Principal Engineer), Andrew Dodkins (Group Engineer - Redev & Env Works), Peter George (Programme Director, Meridian Water), Rafe Bertram (Sustainability Lead - Meridian Water), Koulla Panaretou (Mayoral Services Manager)

Also Attending: Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu, Cllr Has Yusuf, Cllr Nesil Caliskan (Leader of the Council),

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Cllr Mahmut Aksanoglu, sent his apologies for lateness and Cllr Susan Erbil chaired the meeting until he arrived at Agenda Item 4.

Cllr Has Yusuf attended on behalf of Cllr Ayten Guzel and Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu attended on behalf of Cllr Ahmet Hassan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest registered in relation to any items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Environment & Climate Action Scrutiny Panel held on the 13th July 2021 were agreed.

4. MERIDIAN WATER ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

The Panel received a report on the Meridian Water Environment Strategy progress update, outlining the last 12 months of delivery.

In response the following comments were received:

1. In respect of the introduction in Appendix B of the report, where navigation was given to explore answers to questions previously posed. It was felt that these questions should have been shared to provide more context to the report.

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2. In response, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Nesil Caliskan, advised that the questions gathered through the Members Enquiries system were collated and under her instruction, Officers put together the report based on the answers. She invited any further outstanding questions to be put to the Officers verbally at the meeting. The Chair also asked if supplementary questions need responding to, if they could be sent to him, he will ensure they are answered. **ACTION**

3. Cllr Thorpe and other panel members noted that answers to questions had been provided in Appendix B of the information provided ahead of the meeting, but not the questions to which the answers related, which was felt to be confusing and disjointed and requested that the questions be provided in the report pack.

4. Cllr Gunawardena requested for it be minuted that the questions had all been asked by the previous panel and that only after they had remained unanswered for up to 7 months did he then ask the questions via an MEQ because the committee was running out of time to produce a summary report. Cllr Caliskan said officers would answer any of the questions not answered and provide written responses.

5. Cllr Yusuf said that it had been agreed that all the questions asked from the last panel were going to be incorporated into the report for tonight's meeting and that the questions were submitted to officers via the correct procedure at the right time.

6. Cllr Gunawardena said the answers made little sense without the questions and a fully referenced report backing them up and requested the panel attach that report with these answers. The Cllr confirmed there were still outstanding questions that had not been answered and further questions had been submitted on 6th October that had not been answered.

7. Clarity was sought regarding the Public Open Space of 30%. How was this calculated, per head or land space and how is this done elsewhere?

8. In response, at the 30% metric, much benchmarking was done with major developments in and around London to ascertain best practice. It was therefore important that Meridian Water was seen to have a relationship with nature, this being a common metric within the industry. The amount of open space per 1000 people within a development was researched and the calculations were therefore based on 24.5K people living in Meridian Water, and 6K working there; the metric is 1 hectare of open space per 1K people, again deemed good practice as much of the area will comprise of low rise, low density accommodation, a higher metric would not be viewed as suitable.

Providing enough open space per head is not a suitable calculation as account needs to be taken that residents in a block will have less space than those in a bungalow for example. Not everyone uses green space at the same

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time. Meridian Water residents will have access to many other comparable urban spaces, built with good, creative designs for many to enjoy.

9. The amount of green space in Edmonton as a whole was questioned.

10. The figures quoted represent a borough wide average taking into account other parts of the borough, as Enfield has huge green spaces overall. The targets set for Meridian Water in terms of green space are set by the Government and London Mayor in context with the Local Plan. London is still in the midst of a housing crisis and a balance has to be reached. It is deemed that 30% green open space is best practice and still allows the development of affordable homes.

Meridian Water is able to deliver parks and open spaces whilst connecting with the neighbouring Lea Valley.

11. Cllr Thorpe questioned the 30% open space aspiration and questioned whether it was industry standard noting that it seemed rather odd to use percentage of land space as a metric, rather than doing it per head, and thought it was a better metric to talk about open space per planned head of population.

12. Peter George said 30% is a common metric within the industry when looking at the amount of open space. He stated that the council had looked at the ratio per 1,000 residents and said there would be about 24,500 residents living at Meridian Water plus those working there. It worked out as just under 1 hectare per 1,000 residents, and that this also stood up as good practice.

13. Cllr Thorpe said from his research that the standard was closer to double at around 2 hectares per 1,000 people. Peter George said the 2-hectare figure applies to lower density housing, so that metric was not a suitable benchmark for Meridian Water.

Cllr Thorpe disagreed saying that denser developments required more open space around it, not less.

Cllr Caliskan said people would use other spaces and wouldn't use the space at the same time.

Cllr Thorpe concluded that he thought it was shame that the council was not being more aspirational about nature.

14. Cllr Gunawardena noted that the council's Blue and Green Strategy set the standard at 2.15 hectares per 1,000 residents and on this basis 65 hectares of green space at Meridian Water would be needed, meaning there will be a shortfall of 43, using the Blue & Green Strategy measure. The Cllr also noted that there was already a deficiency of green space in Upper Edmonton and was concerned that the current plan for Meridian Water would make this far worse by adding a massive population. The Cllr highlighted that the deficiency in green space in Upper Edmonton would go from 45 as a deficit of around 89 hectares and said that it very important that Meridian

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Water address this issue directly and not to duck the issue or move the goalposts.

15. Cllr Gunawardena said that in the unpublished Meridian Water report showed comparisons and the green space at Meridian Water is just not enough.

Peter George said the Blue & Green figure was a borough wide average and that 30% open space was the best in London.

16. Point 8 of report on page 5 of the pack should read 2020 not 2021 and will be updated.

17. With regard the recycling of household rubbish, how can residents living in high rise blocks carry out heavy refuse easily.

18. In response, the location of the bins is being looked at and they will be strategically placed following research on where the most people pass during the day, perhaps on their way to work, school drop offs, shopping etc. This is an ongoing piece of research. There are different options presently being investigated. Putting in shoots may be an alternative although issues exist, such as smell and blockages etc. It is a main priority to get this right and improve the way people live in the long term.

19. The target of 50%+ recycling rates is a massive gap to climb. Are there any examples to compare results and see if improvements have been made?

In response there are no accurate figures to share yet and Cllr Nesil Caliskan advised that she will ask Officers to look more into this issue and provide a follow up note to provide examples and comparable information. **ACTION**

20. Cllr Rawlings questioned how people would recycle on their way out and there was a discussion about how to improve recycling rates. Peter George said chutes in buildings have downsides, for example blocking.

Cllr Gunawardena noted that on recycling Enfield was around 33% or less at the moment and on flats about 15%, so with a target of 50% recycling there was a massive gap to climb. The Cllr referred to new schemes in North America which have chutes for each type of waste and that they worked well, so it really needs to be addressed.

Cllr Caliskan said officers would look in more detail at this issue.

21. Cllr Gunawardena said he would like the other questions he asked in advance answered as being restricted to a single question was too limiting. The Chair confirmed that these have been submitted and Cllr Caliskan confirmed that these would be answered. Cllr Gunawardena gave examples of questions that had not been answered related to the 30% open space, the tree canopy question, and energy consumption levels.

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It was confirmed that the 30% canopy cover was a proportion of the open space, so it was not a percentage of the entire site but a percentage of the open space, and that the tree species were in the planning applications.

The panel noted the target was for 9% of overall space to be tree canopy and asked that this figure be communicated this way in future as it was more transparent.

22. It was noted that it was pleasing to see biodiversity addressed. Is Edmonton Eco Park part of the plan for Meridian Water?

The recycling centre at the Eco Park is available to Meridian Water residents which is important bearing in mind the number of people who will be living there. This alone will not help keep in line with the targets and more encouragement and help to recycle adequately will also help.

Energetik are building pipes at the moment and this will help the relationship between Meridian Water and Edmonton Eco Park, which provides energy to warm houses, ensuring that the fabric of the buildings designed are of a high quality to ensure heat is unable to escape easily.

There is a Resource Recovery Centre in the Eco Park that take black bags and go through them to see what could be recycled. At present only bulky waste collections are pre-sorted. This is a new facility for the public to use.

Cllr Yusuf asked about how the Edmonton EcoPark / Energetik related to the this?

Cllr Caliskan said having the recycling centre in such close proximity to Meridian Water was important

23. Has vegetable oil been used before instead of diesel?

In response this was the first time this had been used on construction sites although had been used elsewhere and reduces carbon emissions by 90%.

24. What extent is the strategy dependent on grant funding?

In response, the pace of implementation has improved by the ability to obtain the grant. Bids are being submitted to relevant bodies to apply for grants to help meet the carbon challenge and improve standards in housing delivery. Energetik have received grant funding and central government have given the Council grant funding also.

Strategy was not dependence on grants but the pace of development was. Strategy puts in strong place to apply for environmental grant.

Cllr Anderson asked about examples of other developments where the strategy is seeking to align more closely with the target for recycling rates.

Cllr Anderson also asked for additional examples of best practice more widely in regard to targets **in the sustainability strategy** as these would help to understand if the ambition could be achieved e.g. in recycling.

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Cllr Caliskan said that they would find comparable examples and that these should be provided.

25. Are residents of Meridian Water involved in the green agenda?

In response, engagement with all residents has been delayed in recent months due to Covid pandemic. Before the pandemic, positive sessions were being held in community buildings with residents, obtaining their views in relation to Meridian Water. Face to face meetings stopped thereafter and resumed virtually. Next year if the pandemic calms down the officers will be back out engaging with residents.

Cllr Nesil Caliskan advised that Meridian Water team are working on the updated master plan with a view to taking this to Cabinet next summer, thus giving enough time to have a thorough conversation with residents and inform them of the updates and provide more vision on what is being proposed. The key principals of the Meridian Water Scheme must be co-design and adaptations need to be made for individual needs. The design for Meridian One came from an Edmonton based practice and the Meridian 4 involved an architect firm from Edmonton, therefore local firms know the area and can talk to the residents directly about their needs.

Peter George stated there was engagement with residents.

The master plan will help people have a more accurate representation of what is being proposed.

26. Cllr Gunawardena asked about the process for producing a report and who is writing it and what is the process and what is the schedule?

The Chair said this would be discussed after the meeting and that he would liaise with governance team **ACTION**

27. Councillors discussed the need for the committee to make recommendations and suggestions back to cabinet.

Cllr Rawlings said the scrutiny panel needed to make suggestions, for example: Should we go for 30% open space or should we go for more? What should we do with recycling? What's the tree cover? There was a feeling that suggestions should be made in a single document as opposed to a question and answer session that had taken place in this meeting.

Cllr Caliskan acknowledged that some of the answers that had been provided were not adequate. The Chair would follow up with officers on outstanding queries and questions **ACTION**

The Chair thanked the officers for the information provided.

In conclusion, the Chair asked

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1. That Officers respond to questions sent under separate cover by Cllr Charith Gunawardena;
2. In relation to the target of 50%+ recycling rates, Officers to look more into this issue and provide a follow up note to provide examples and comparable information.

5. REVIEW OF THE WETLANDS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Panel received an update on the Wetlands and Woodlands in the Borough.

The following points were highlighted by Ian Russell, Principal Engineer.

1. The Borough of Enfield has three main rivers which are natural assets, their downside is flood risk.
2. Pipe drainage was explained in detail and the multiple benefits of wetlands includes flood storage, water quality, biodiversity and amenity.
3. Constructed wetlands slow the flow and funding for wetland projects has been provided by a variety of external organisations.
4. Over 150 Rain Gardens have been created Enfield in recent years, known as mini-wetlands, providing similar benefits to wetlands but in an urban environment. Although smaller, if abundant in numbers, have the potential to address flood risk and other urban issues.
5. National flood management measures include ponds and wetlands, river restoration, re-connecting floodplains and woodland creation.

In response the following comments were received:

1. Residents need to be educated on the reasonings behind rewilding and wetlands. Complaints are received from residents that the type of trees being planted in their streets are more suited to parks and open spaces and not for street planting.

In response, over the last few years much work and research has been done to ascertain the right species of trees most suited to streets. 30 years ago this work was not being carried out. Older trees are now beginning to be replaced with more suitable trees that grow upright, spread out less and consider root growth (thus avoiding subsidence issues). With this in mind, many larger trees reduce a lot of carbon and pollution and a balance is needed, as well as careful consideration.

2. The work of the tree department was commended, and the work valued over the years.

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3. It was confirmed that 2 beavers will be introduced. It is hoped that they will then go on to have children and increase in number (they breed annually). They need to be kept in an enclosure but may need to be moved if the family gets too big.

4. With regard to the Rain Gardens, how is the accumulation of litter being addressed?

In response, litter gets trapped easily in Rain Gardens and this is addressed every two months. If vegetation is dense and established, litter is more hidden, and this has been recognised as an issue. The team are looking at a new project of moving this responsibility to the grounds maintenance and waste team and the handover period is currently being refined.

5. With regard to the proposed tree planting in Enfield, it is understood that the trees will not flourish for many years thus the solution is not immediate. Perhaps other areas need to be considered?

In response, there is a pruning plan for every tree in the Borough. There is a record of every tree and where trees are removed, a new tree is planted, which is more specific and suited to the environment.

6. Maintenance is a big issue, what is the plan for this?

In response, educating the public on the work that is being done. For example, untidy overgrowths are good for wildlife in certain areas. If this sort of reasoning is explained, perhaps fewer complaints would be received. Some farmland can be an option for new woodland.

7. The onus needs to be put on individuals to be encouraged to get involved. Speak to schools and try to bridge the communication gap and language barriers. Ward Councillors can also help with this piece of work as a connection with their community, helping to address the litter problem. The Council needs to do more work with Youth Groups, Boys Brigade, Scouts etc. NEXUS are already doing this.

In response, the "Restoring Rivers Project" and the "Climate Action Workshop" have written to all schools offered them to be as involved as they want to be in local wetlands etc. Thames 21 is a good advocate in this work and could encourage Youth Clubs etc to connect with them.

8. Perhaps some road names on the map on page 45 would be more helpful and ask residents where they want to see the trees planted too.

All comments were noted and the Chair thanked the officers for their informative presentation.

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6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 9th December 2021.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.