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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 2.6.2015

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 JUNE 2015

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Derek Levy (Chair), Abdul Abdullahi, Katherine Chibah, Krystle Fonyonga (Vice Chair), Joanne Laban, Edward Smith, Achilleas Georgiou, Daniel Anderson

ABSENT

STATUTORY CO-OPTES: *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Mr Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations representative), Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Claire Johnson (Scrutiny Manager), Jane Juby (Scrutiny Officer), Nicky Fiedler (Assistant Director, Public Realm), Ian Davis (Director, Regeneration and Environment)

Also Attending: 18 members of the public. 1 member of the press.

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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed attendees and new Members of the Committee to the meeting.

The Chair then outlined how the meeting was to proceed; he emphasised that the meeting was primarily for the Committee to discuss and agree its annual Work Programme and workstreams, but that a report on Parks Locking would additionally be heard as the first main item.

The Chair reiterated that this report was for information only and that any questions should be made at the appropriate time and within the context of the report.

The Chair concluded by emphasising the important role Scrutiny had to play in the municipal process in investigating issues of concern to Enfield and that the Committee should endeavour to work collaboratively to ensure this happened effectively.

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ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Cllr Abdullahi **NOMINATED** Cllr Fonyonga as Vice Chair.

The nomination was **SECONDED** by Cllr Laban.

Cllr Fonyonga was duly **ELECTED** Vice Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair asked if any Members of the Committee wished to declare any pecuniary interest. No interests were declared.

The Chair asked if there were any non-pecuniary or any other kind of interest that might compromise a Member's contribution to the meeting. No interests were declared.

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PARKS LOCKING**

The Chair reminded attendees that although consideration of this item would take place under Part 1, there was a Part 2 agenda which contained personal data pertaining to individual residents (for example, email addresses). The Part 2 agenda was therefore of an administrative nature only, but attendees should exercise discretion when referring to the correspondence therein.

Cllr Anderson, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report as follows:

- The decision to unlock parks had previously been called-in in October of last year. It had been agreed that implementation of the decision be suspended until the spring of 2015 to enable consultation with the Police and Friends of the Parks.
- During the intervening period a considerable number of responses to the consultation had been received. The report outlined the extent of the consultation.
- It had been identified that there were particular perceptions around incidents of crime in parks that were of concern to those consulted; reference was made to paragraph 3.6 of the report which mapped out the general perspectives in this regard.
- Residents were concerned that if fully locked parks were unlocked, there would be a rise in Anti-Social Behaviour and other related types of crime.
- In general, the Friends of Parks were, however, supportive of unlocking partially locked parks.
- It had therefore been decided that the 13 parks currently fully locked would remain so. Those parks currently partially locked would be unlocked, but any toilets or vehicle barriers at these sites would be locked. Broomfield Park, which previously had been only partially locked due to the presence of a tenant, would also now be fully locked.
- All parks would, however, be opened whenever contractor access was required.
- Contractors would be employed to carry out locking and unlocking.

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- The annual saving achieved would be £9,450.

Cllr Anderson concluded by commenting that the above appeared to be the best and most pragmatic way forward and he hoped that residents felt their views had been listened to and taken into account. He looked forward to establishing positive relationships with the Friends of Parks and was mindful of the valuable work volunteers undertook to help manage the Borough's parks and open spaces.

The following comments and questions were then taken from Members of the Committee:

Cllr Laban wished the meeting to note that this was not a problem of Cllr Anderson's making. She then referred to paragraph 3.5.5 of the report and asked for clarification on the numbers of people for and against the proposals; it appeared that residents who had expressed no view had been assumed to have been supportive of the decision.

Nicky Fiedler responded that officers had met individually with the Friends of Parks and had also written to a number of other residents not directly affected by the proposals.

These residents were contacted on two occasions. If no response was received, it had been accepted that such residents did not have any particular view on the matter, and were impartial.

Q: Appendix 3 refers to robbery and theft in parks but it is well known that there are other types of crime taking place; for example, the particularly horrific crime that took place in Jubilee Park last year. Why has this not been recorded?

A: It is acknowledged that a variety of crimes take place in the Borough's parks, however, robbery and theft were those of greatest concern to residents.

Q: When were the Police consulted on the proposals? A Freedom of Information Act request was submitted by Cllr Neville to the Borough Commander and her response seems to contradict the report; were the Police consulted in August/September or October/December?

A: The Borough Commander was in consultation with the Council during drafting of the report in August/September.

Q: Referring to paragraph 3.6.4, what type of monitoring will be undertaken and how often?

A: In line with any matter of policy the Council implements, regular monitoring will be undertaken to ensure things are working as effectively as possible. Given the high profile of this issue, we would expect the Council to be made aware of any concerns as soon as they arise. There will be a continual process of evaluation.

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Q: Can residents be assured that if any serious incidents take place or there are significant spikes in crime anywhere that the Council would reconsider the matter?

A: The Council would always wish to take a balanced and sensible approach; it needs to be recognised that there will always be people who are determined to cause damage in parks but the Council would of course react to any such occurrences.

Cllr Smith expressed his broad agreement with the decision but wished to see more explicit detail as to what the programme of locking and unlocking would be in each park (i.e. pedestrian and vehicular access, and toilets). He requested that a revised schedule be circulated outlining each circumstance

ACTION: Nicky Fiedler.

Cllr Anderson confirmed that this would be provided and also referred the Committee to paragraph 3.6.3 of the report for details.

Q: Referring to Enfield Playing Fields, there is a pedestrian only access barrier next to a vehicular gate at one entrance point. Given their proximity, would it not be possible for the pedestrian access to be locked when the vehicle barrier is locked?

A: There is the potential to do this but this may mean that pedestrian access is closed earlier than others. If this would be the case, we would need to consult with the Friends of Parks.

Q: What happens if access through a park is required to visit a school after hours (for example, for meetings, or an after school club)?

A: Arrangements are made with the school concerned on an ad hoc basis. The Council always puts up signs advising people when certain barriers will be opened and closed.

The following comments and questions were then taken from members of the public:

A resident commented that, on behalf of the Friends of Parks and concerned residents, the issue had been a difficult one and that residents felt 'bruised' by the experience. Residents had felt that, in the first instance, they were not properly consulted and the importance of the Friends of the Parks not recognised. They had felt badly treated. Concerns of a managerial nature still remained but in the round, residents now felt their concerns had been addressed.

Cllr Anderson responded that he understood residents' feelings and appreciated the value of organisations such as the Friends of Parks. He assured residents that his intention was to work closely and co-operatively with them.

A second resident commented that he was very happy that Cllr Anderson had been appointed Cabinet Member and that residents had now been properly

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consulted. He asked for assurance that this kind of situation would not arise again.

Cllr Anderson again reiterated his acknowledgement of residents' concerns and that he wished to build positive relationships with residents and the Friends of Parks.

A third resident commented that incidents in parks were not always properly reported to the Police; he asked that the system of recording and reporting incidents be reviewed so that patterns could be more clearly identified and statistics were fully accurate.

A fourth resident requested that the meeting be reported in the local press; it was noted that a member of the press was present.

Another resident commented that he acknowledged not all of the larger open spaces could be properly secured (for example, Trent Park).

Cllr Anderson summarised by commenting that he hoped residents felt the decision outlined in the report allayed fears expressed and took the matter forward.

The Committee confirmed the report as duly **RECEIVED**.

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WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKSTREAMS FOR 2015/16

The Chair invited Cllr Georgiou, Deputy Leader, to outline the Cabinet's priorities for 2015/16 and to suggest possible scrutiny topics.

Cllr Georgiou proposed the following areas for consideration:

- Health; in particular:
 - Primary Health Care – are any health inequalities occurring due to the accessibility of services?
 - Improving access to services for those with sensory impairment (for example, the deaf community).
- Children and Education, namely:
 - School Places – What has been achieved in terms of provision and what still needs to be done?
 - Standards and Attainment – How well is the Council doing in raising standards and attainment levels? How do different areas of the Borough compare in these respects?
- Skills, Learning and Enterprise, including:
 - Young People – are young people adequately prepared for employment or further education?
 - Business Development/Inward Investment – how well is the Council doing to attract new businesses and inward investment to the Borough?

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- Enforcement, in particular:
 - Improving the Council's ability to enforce on private land (for example, to control vermin or flytipping).
 - Planning – can anything be done to speed up/improve processes?

The Committee then discussed potential workstreams. It was acknowledged that there should be a balance of shorter and more extended reviews. Cabinet Members could also be invited to meetings where appropriate.

The Scrutiny Manager referred to a table of topics proposed but not undertaken last year and a list of other suggested topics and asked the Committee to consider which of these they may wish to take forward. It was noted that some would be more appropriately covered as report items to the full Committee. It was also noted that workstreams should, wherever possible, look to achieve specific outcomes for the community.

Cllr Smith asked what the next steps now were for the workstreams that had been undertaken the previous year.

The Scrutiny Manager responded that reports were being finalised with recommendations and that it had been proposed to bring these reports to a meeting of the Committee on 30 July. Recommendations would be circulated to workstream members. Recommendations would be monitored to ensure they were being implemented.

The following workstreams and Cllr leads were **AGREED**:

School Places – Cllr Chibah

Standards and Attainment – Cllr Chibah

Adoption and Fostering – Cllr Fonyonga

Enforcement/Keep Enfield Clean – Cllr Laban

Land Planning – Cllr Smith

Integrated Care (health and adult social care) – Cllr Abdullahi

Sensory Impairment – Access to Services – Cllr Abdullahi

The following additional points were noted in respect of these workstreams:

Adoption and Fostering – this workstream would consider any potential 'gaps' in service and how to reduce the time taken to adopt/foster.

Enforcement – this workstream would include how to improve enforcement on private land and the Keep Enfield Clean initiative.

Land Planning – This workstream could look at the Meridian Water Masterplan and may also consider wider economic/business development issues.

It was then **AGREED** that the following workstreams be prioritised in the Work Programme:

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- School Places;
- Enforcement/Keep Enfield Clean;
- Land Planning;
- Adoption and Fostering
- Sensory Impairment – Access to Services

The relevant Cllr leads would draft scoping documents for these workstreams in consultation with officers **ACTION: Committee Members/Scrutiny Officers.**

It was also **AGREED** that the Standing Scrutiny Workstreams appoint the following Chairs:

Health Scrutiny Standing Workstream – Cllr Abdullahi
Crime Scrutiny Standing Workstream – Cllr Laban

Consideration of ERPF efficiency was proposed as a workstream; it was noted that a report on this was, however, already scheduled for the September meeting.

It was noted that Cllr Abdullahi had recently been in contact with Healthwatch Enfield and had received a number of reports from them which might inform topics for future workstreams.

The Chair asked Cllr Laban if she considered that her leading role as a Shadow Cabinet Member, with particular interest in and emphasis on Environment Department matters, presented any conflict of interest with the workstream which she proposed, and could be undertaken with a fully open mind. Cllr Laban replied that she felt no conflict of interest in this regard.

Cllr Smith proposed that the issue of the integration of Enfield Homes with the Council and housing repairs be considered by the Committee; it was **AGREED** that this could be taken in the form of a report to the Committee in 9 months and be scheduled appropriately **ACTION: Scrutiny Manager.**

Cllr Laban felt that future workstreams should be more focused on inward service delivery, rather than outward partnership working.

Cllr Smith commented that he felt vocational training was an important issue and may be a good future workstream topic.

Consideration of the role of the voluntary sector in Enfield was also proposed as a potential workstream topic, the Chair would look into this further.

Cllr Chibah asked if there was a degree of flexibility within the Committee's Work Programme to take urgent items when necessary; the Scrutiny Manager responded that the Programme could always be adjusted as appropriate.

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The Chair then commented that a Child Sexual Exploitation Task Group had now been set up and it would be useful for the Committee to receive reports from the Group at appropriate points **ACTION: Scrutiny Manager.**

Cllr Laban commented that a report on the Enfield 2017 Programme should also come to the Committee at an appropriate time **ACTION: Scrutiny Manager.**

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING 1 AND 8 APRIL 2015

The Minutes of the meetings held on 1 and 8 April were **AGREED.**

Cllr Smith referred to information requested by the Committee that remained outstanding from the meetings of 1 and 8 April and asked that this be followed up as a matter of priority **ACTION: Scrutiny Manager.**

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were **NOTED.**

It was **AGREED** that a meeting would be held on the provisional date of 30 July to receive the finalised workstream reports for 2014/15.

It was also **NOTED** that the provisional date of 16 July could be utilised for a scoping meeting if required.

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EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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PARKS LOCKING - APPENDICES 1 AND 4

See Item 19.