

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 2020

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu, Anne Brown, Katherine Chibah (Chair) and Lindsay Rawlings

Dennis Stacey (Bush Hill Park Conservation Area Study Group)
Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group)
Rex Bourne (Edmonton One Hundred Historical Society)
Carol Cragoe (Enfield Town Conservation Area Study Group)
Ann Bishop Laggett (Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations)
Paul Hutchinson (Grange Park Conservation Area Study Group)
Robert Wilson (Hadley Wood Conservation Area Study Group)
Adrian Day (Lakes Estate Study Group)
Chris Horner (Southgate District Civic Voice)
John West (The Enfield Society)
Juliet Barnett (Trent Park Conservation Committee)

Officers: Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place) Claire Johnson (Head of Governance and Scrutiny), David Taylor (Head of Traffic and Transportation) Elaine Huckell (Governance and Scrutiny Officer), Penelope Williams (Secretary)

Also Attending: Kayhan Ali (Young Mayor), Amma Coleman Green (Transport for London), 20 members of the public

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Environment Forum.

She went through some basic housekeeping rules and apologised to those who were only able to dial into the meeting, assuring members that this would be resolved for the next meeting.

Everyone participating in the meeting introduced themselves.

Claire Johnson (Head of Governance and Scrutiny) advised that the Environment Forum was a new advisory body with a broad remit:

- To advise and comment on policies and strategic issues that affect the built and natural environment
- To encourage community initiatives that improve sustainability
- To enable information exchange and networking among members and supporters in Enfield
- To scrutinise and monitor the progress of the Local Plan

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The forum will cover issues concerning the green belt, conservation of the borough and public transport. The terms of reference were agreed at Annual Council and were included in the Council's Constitution. Copies were available on the Council website or on request.

Concern was expressed by Dennis Stacey (former Chair of the Conservation Advisory Group) that the new body had been set up using an old Conservation Advisory Group membership list and had not included representative from the Lakes Estate Conservation Study Group, the Hadley Wood Association Study Group and the Winchmore Hill Green and Vicars Moor Lane Study Group who had been active members of the Conservation Advisory Group. Names of several of the groups mentioned were inaccurate. He was however pleased to acknowledge that representatives from the three groups mentioned above had been invited to this meeting.

Other bodies including the Georgian Group and the Enfield Archaeological Society had also been members of the Conservation Advisory Group and it was hoped that invitations could also be extended to these organisations.

The Chair advised that she was looking to carry out a full review the membership of the Environment Forum and would be consulting with the Director of Law and Governance on the best way to do this.

The current membership asked to see the draft of the new membership proposals before they were considered at full Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Denise Gandhi.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Anne Brown, Councillor Lindsay Rawlings, Dennis Stacey, Chris Horner declared non-pecuniary interests in Item 3, Changes to Concessionary travel, as they had freedom passes.

3. CHANGES TO CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

David Taylor (Head of Traffic and Transportation) gave a presentation on Concessionary Travel. Copies of the slides were available on the Council website or from the Committee Secretary.

He highlighted the following:

- The presentation covered four separate concessions: under 18 free travel, the Transport for London Oyster card, the freedom pass and special needs educational travel.
- Young people living in London had been able to travel in London for free since free travel was introduced in 2005. This was not so in the rest of the country.

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- The free travel was funded by Transport for London. The government was now proposing to temporarily remove or restrict free travel, arguing that there was a need to discourage people from traveling on public transport, and encourage more walking and cycling, because of reduced capacity, resulting from Coronavirus restrictions.
- The Mayor of London funded the Transport for London Oyster card for all Londoners over the age of 60. This did not apply in the rest of the country.
- The Freedom pass was a concession that was available to everyone over retirement age across the country. The costs of this were shared by the Government, Transport for London and the borough. It cost the Council £11.5m a year.
- The Council has a statutory duty to fund Special Educational Needs Travel. This was a significant cost and there was no extra support for it.

The Chair introduced Amma Coleman-Green from Transport for London who gave a verbal presentation. The key points were as follows:

- As part of its agreement to provide funds to make up for the losses caused by the Coronavirus, the Government have asked Transport for London to temporarily suspend free travel for under 18's.
- This would take effect after the October half term, in the first week in November.
- There were some exceptions and free travel would continue for under 10s, for 11-17 year olds who live more than 2 miles from their school or college, for 11-17 year olds who live less than 2 miles if they were under a social worker, have an educational health and social care plan, attend alternative provision, if there were no safe walking routes to school or they couldn't walk because of a physical disability.
- Discussions with the Government were continuing. There were still some technical complexities still to be worked out.
- The aim was to prevent overcrowding and facilitate social distancing on public transport.
- The same aim was behind the decision to temporarily remove free peak time travel for the Over 60 Oyster card and Freedom Pass holders, which had been implemented on 4 June 2020.
- Transport for London had contacted all in receipt of these passes to inform them of the changes and had written to health bodies, supermarkets and other organisations to ask them to give priority to over 60s for appointments and for priority access out of peak hours.
- Over 10,000 older people in Enfield would have been affected. An equality impact statement was being carried out.
- To mitigate the impact of these changes and to avoid a car led recovery, Transport for London had brought in measures to encourage walking and cycling, introducing schemes to make these activities safer and easier, including widening pavements and erecting temporary barriers.

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- Transport for London had also written to schools to ask them to encourage active travel and would be providing an extra 200 buses, on the busiest routes, to help increase capacity, at key times.

The Young Mayor of Enfield, Kayhan Ali, made a presentation on behalf of young people, highlighting the impact that the removal of concessionary travel would have on the under 18s.

- The presentation included the reasons for the travel ban, who it would affect and why it was so important to young people.
- There had been a strong backlash against the proposals. The Child Poverty Action Group were running a campaign “Don’t Zap the Zip”. They had already collected a petition containing over 200,000 signatures and were also encouraging young people to contact their MPs.
- Free travel was essential to many young people, not only as a means of getting to and from school, but also to enable them to broaden their horizons, explore across London and meet up with their friends. Many could not afford to pay and would not be able to go out and about without free travel. Quotes from several young people were included. Free travel also had economic benefits for everyone.
- Public transport was for many a safer means of travel, particularly at a time of rising knife crime. Young people often felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods, particularly after dark. These restrictions would be bought in at a time when the evenings would be getting darker.

The Chair thanked Kayhan Ali for his excellent presentation and opened the discussion to all.

The following points came up in the discussion:

- It was important to avoid a car led recovery to protect the environment and air quality.
- We should lobby Government to stop them implementing this change which would disadvantage young people and could also create confusion and dispute if the change was not well communicated.
- We need to lobby the Government to prevent this change which would save money at the expense of the most vulnerable both young and old and those with special educational needs. It would restrict people’s freedom of movement and isolate people further, particularly those who could not walk or cycle.
- It was very important to protect this concession for young people who had suffered so much during this pandemic including the recent A level and GCSE results fiasco.

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- So much had been done to encourage people to use public transport instead of cars, that it was a shame to go backwards with this move.
- More publicity was needed to make people aware of the changes and to encourage them to object. The Young Mayor had lots of ideas about how to do this and was working on his own campaign.
- The contributions from so many immensely knowledgeable environment groups was welcomed by councillors.
- The focus for this forum had to be on environmental and health outcomes.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and suggestions for action.

AGREED to note all the contributions received and to express support for the campaigns to persuade the Government to reinstate concessionary travel to the affected groups.

4. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2020/21

Sarah Cary, Executive Director Place gave a presentation on a proposed work programme for the Environment Forum including Council priorities and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Copies of the slides were available on the Council website or from the Committee Secretary.

Key points of the presentation were as follows:

- Enfield had approximately 330,000 people and 125,000 households. It has a housing crisis with average cost of housing 12.3 times average salary, relatively high levels of unemployment compared with the London average, a good cultural offer with lots of theatres, parks, open spaces and libraries and a wealth of cultures and languages, that enliven the borough.
- The Council's overriding aim was to create a lifetime of opportunities for everyone including three key priorities: good homes in well connected neighbourhoods; safe healthy and confident communities and an economy that works for everyone.
- The priorities involved planning to build more and better homes for residents, to invest and improve Council homes, to deliver household and regeneration schemes and to drive investment to deliver good growth for London, being open, supportive and welcoming to new developments.
- The Council was working towards being free from crime, inspiring people to meet their potential, delivering essential services to vulnerable residents and creating healthy parks and community spaces.
- The Council wanted to provide an economy that worked for everyone, by providing high quality employment, enhancing skills, developing the town centres and crafting a good cultural offer. The Council was also

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prioritising the issue of climate change and was always concerned to provide value for money.

- The Council faced significant challenges as a result of the Coronavirus crisis. So far, the Council had responded well, keeping schools open, redeploying staff, supporting vulnerable local people, organising the delivery of food parcels and medicines.
- The country was now formally in recession 49,000 in Enfield were on furlough (about 35% of the borough's work force). Not all would be able to return to work so unemployment would increase. Footfall in town centres was down 60-80%. The Council was preparing for the possibility of local lockdowns, a potential second wave of infection and an increase in demand for social services while also continuing to find significant extra savings to maintain a balanced budget.
- To note that a draft work programme had been circulated with the agenda. Items put forward had been grouped under four headings Sustainable Transport, Climate Action, Environment, Heritage and Design. The topics suggested were as follows:
 - Sustainable Transport
 - Under 18s and Freedom Passes: concessionary travel
 - Further rail devolution; TfL taking over GTR services
 - Bus Economics: Cost of running services
 - Impact of Covid 19 on bus and rail services
 - Expansion of the ULEZ to the north circular
 - Public realm changes to support cycling and walking and better air quality
 - Climate Action
 - Community initiatives promoting environmental sustainability in support of the Climate Action Plan
 - Government housing retrofit programme
 - Refurbishment and retrofit in schools
 - Environment
 - Air quality in the borough
 - Enforcement in the green belt
 - Workshop on development of green infrastructure and parks strategy
 - Rewilding and tree planting
 - Future landscape of planning – planning reform
 - Including white paper and extension of permitted development
 - Emerging new local plan policies
 - Major applications that substantially affect the green belt
 - Heritage and Design
 - Use of Heritage Lottery Funding
 - Workshop on housing needs, capacity and design of buildings
 - Major applications that substantially affect conservation areas

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The Chair read out a list of suggestions she had received via email before the meeting – (comments in response in brackets):

- Enfield Chase Restoration Project (this would be included under rewilding and tree planting item mentioned above).
- Planning Applications within in conservation areas (this had been included above)
- Monitoring the Local List and Historic Buildings at Risk (this would be considered for inclusion in the workplan)
- Strategic transport implications of major developments such as that proposed at Chase Farm and the Colosseum Retail Park (major planning applications were included)
- Transport for London Development at Cockfosters Underground Station (major planning applications like this would be included)
- Update on Planning Applications previously covered by CAG (this could be considered for major applications)
- Becoming a Fair Trade Borough again (this was a possibility)
- Tackling air pollution and carbon emissions from traffic (would fall under the item on air pollution above)
- How to move beyond relying on incineration for waste disposal (further details required)

The chair then opened the discussion to everyone in the meeting and the following suggestions for items to be included in the work programme were received (comments in response in brackets):

- The Local Plan and the Green Belt – (these were already part of the proposed work plan)
- Whitewebbs Golf Course (no decision had yet been taken on this but it could come forward at a later date)
- Meridian Water Development
- Transport for London development at Arnos Grove (could be considered as a major application)
- The Edmonton Incinerator – this is due to be replaced by a new heat and power plant. Members were invited to write to the chair with more details about what they would like to see discussed by the forum.
- Review of planning applications and not just those affecting conservation areas (major planning applications with an impact on conservation areas and the green belt would be considered. A mechanism for how this would work would be developed and communicated to forum members) Sarah Cary assured members that planning officers would always welcome input from conservation groups on specific planning applications. These groups could also make deputations to the Planning Committee. Planners did appreciate

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the good advice they received from conservation group representatives and would want to continue to receive this.

- Consideration of Listed Buildings and Local List – The Enfield Society monitored these regularly and worked closely with Christine White (Heritage and Urban Design Manager) to try and prevent buildings falling into disrepair. It was requested that these lists could be considered at the forum least once a year.
- Public Footpaths and Rights of Way – Enfield's current map was acknowledged to be poor and could be improved. (this was an issue that could be considered)
- The impact of the Coronavirus on the way we work. The move away from offices in city centres to more local centres and the need for smaller local office hubs in local centres.

Other Comments

1. Some support for the broadening out of discussion on environment issues but also a concern that the specific focus on conservation areas would be lost especially if the forum was only able to consider major planning applications.
2. Concern about how the best of the work of the former Conservation Advisory Group (CAG) could be incorporated into this new Environment Forum. The new forum had a very wide remit and it would be difficult to give CAG matters the same focus as they had had previously in the separate body.
3. The former Chair of the Conservation Advisory Group, Dennis Stacey was keen to talk to senior officers about how this could happen and was waiting for them to contact him. Sarah Cary assured him that a meeting had been offered and would be arranged.
4. The Conservation Advisory Group was made up of lay advisors with a wealth of experience. That input was in danger of being lost.
5. Concern that the comments made by individual conservation group representatives would lose the impact of a joint response. Part of the benefit of the Conservation Advisory Group was the ability for highly skilled representatives to work together looking at things from different perspectives to achieve a common agreement which then had additional force. Having to process separate comments from individual groups would make more work for the planners.
6. Concern that comments that were put into the online planning system were no longer published.

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7. Concern that it would not be possible to cover all these issues in a two-hour meeting once a month.
8. The comment from the former Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Aksanoglu, that the input of the Conservation Advisory Group was vital to the planning process. He suggested that special meetings could be held to discuss major planning applications if needed.
9. Minor applications could also have a substantial impact on the borough.
10. Concern that the planning processes could be delayed by having to wait for applications to be considered by the forum.
11. To acknowledge that the forum this was a very different body from the Conservation Advisory Group with a different purpose.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and summed up by saying that all suggestions and comments would be considered as part of the final work programme.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted the dates scheduled for future meetings of the forum:

- Thursday 1 October 2020
- Tuesday 27 October 2020
- Wednesday 25 November 2020
- Thursday 10 December 2020
- Wednesday 13 January 2021
- Tuesday 16 February 2021
- Tuesday 30 March 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021