

Opposition Priority Business – The Future of Whitewebbs – 23rd January 2023

Background

- Whitewebbs Park is one of the most important public spaces in the borough. It represents a crucial hub for biodiversity, with 78 species of birds, ancient woodland and a wide variety of flora and fauna.
- The park is enjoyed by people from across the Borough. The Council holds the Park in trust and as part of this trust is expected to maintain open access to the parkland.
- Local people have made their opposition clear to the Council's plan to lease part of the park to Tottenham Hotspur. The Council has failed to fulfil its promises or meet its obligations to the people of Whitewebbs.

Issues

- There have been numerous failures with the Council's management of Whitewebbs Park in recent years. Each stage has been notable for the lack of consultation with users of the park and Friends of Whitewebbs in particular.
- Despite repeated promises not to agree a lease with Tottenham Hotspur until planning permission had been granted, the Council announced its intention to enter into a lease with Tottenham Hotspur on 17th December.
- The timing of the announcement in the week before Christmas was a clear attempt to minimise public objections to the lease. The early granting of the lease also dramatically reduces the possibility of public participation in the process as a whole.
- The announcement also reneged on the Council's promise to engage in a full public consultation before granting a lease as part of the planning process.
- The Council has agreed a lease before the full terms of the lease have been made public and has failed to fulfil its promise of holding a "public engagement day", whilst Tottenham have failed to provide a promised "comprehensive communication plan" ahead of the lease being granted.
- There is substantial legal evidence that the Council has acted illegally in agreeing a lease with Tottenham Hotspur. A letter from the CPRE, Enfield Roadwatch and Friends of Whitewebbs on 3rd November setting out why the lease is a violation of the Council's legal obligation to hold the park in public trust has still not been fully replied to.
- The plans would remove a large part of the park from public use and replace public land with park exclusively for the use of a private corporation. Tottenham Hotspur have also failed to fulfil their obligation to engage with the public, set out further details of their plans or illustrate how they will maintain the park and its biodiversity. They have also not made clear what (if any) plans they have for park improvement.
- Following closure of the golf course, the Council also closed the clubhouse, even though it could have continued as an important community hub and facility. There is a need for investment in facilities, but there is no evidence that the Tottenham plan delivers this.

Recommendations

- The Council should not go ahead with the proposed lease to Tottenham Hotspur, which has no local support and doesn't provide full public access to the park.
- A full and proper consultation should take place into the future of the park, including how the park should be managed and how community and refreshment facilities might be modernised. Such a consultation should take into account the views of local residents, park users and other key stakeholders. Stakeholders who must be consulted include Friends of Whitewebbs; Edmonton Running Club Friends of Hilly Fields; Woodland Trust; Enfield Age UK; Scouts and Guides; Butterfly Conservation; North London & South Herts Ramblers Association; Enfield Sport; Enfield Cycle Campaign; NW London RSPB; Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust; fitness trainers who make use of the park; and local riding stables.
- The Council should work with Friends of Whitewebbs and other stakeholder groups, (such as Edmonton Running Club) to develop a full management plan for the park, which will ensure its financial viability and maintain total public access.
- Whitewebbs Park should be allowed natural regeneration alongside tree-planting and the creation of wildflower-rich glades.
- A Deed of Easement should be formalised between Edmonton Running Club and Enfield Council as soon as possible in order to safeguard their current rights into perpetuity