

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 25TH APRIL, 2023

MEMBERS: Councillors: Nicki Adeleke (Chair), Chris James (Vice-Chair), Nia Stevens, Joanne Laban, and Michael Rye OBE.

Officers: Doug Wilkinson (Director of Environment & Operational Services), Ian Russell (Principal Engineer), Christine White (Heritage & Urban Design Manager), and Harry Blake-Herbert (Governance Officer).

Also Attending: Dave Cockle (The Enfield Society), Chris Horner (Southgate District Civic Voice), Denise Gandhi (Southgate Green Association), Paul Hutchinson (Grange Park Conservation Area Study Group), Dennis Stacey (Bush Hill Park Conservation Area Study Group), Andrew Newman (Clay Hill Study Group), Tracey Adnan (Trent Park Conservation Committee), and officer observing.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rick Jewell (Cabinet Member for Environment); Cllr Maria Alexandrou, who was substituted by Cllr Joanne Laban; and Cllr Hannah Dyson who was substituted by Cllr Michael Rye.

Apologies for absence were also received from: Neil Paddon-Smith (Meadway Group); Carol Fisk (Trent Park Conservation Committee); Richard Beaumont (Forty Hill and Bulls Cross Area Study Group); Robert Wilson (Hadley Wood Conservation Area Study Group & Hadley Wood Association); John West (The Enfield Society), who was substituted by Dave Cockle; and Juliet Barnett (Trent Park Conservation Committee), who was substituted by Tracey Adnan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received regarding any items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 2nd March 2023 as a correct record. Some additional points were noted:

On page 2, a question referred to Mosidge Green, when it should have instead read Mossops Creek.

It was also pointed out that a requested update on planning aspects in respect to telecommunication masts had not been received, and asked that this be

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considered for discussion in the work programme setting, at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

4. GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

It was agreed that the Green and Blue Infrastructure, and Rewilding items on the agenda, would be treated and reported on as one, due to overlapping content.

RECEIVED a presentation from Ian Russell, Principal Engineer, who updated the Forum on Green and Blue Infrastructure, and Rewilding in the borough.

The following comments and questions were received, which officers responded to:

- a. The number of trees felled by officers when moving in the beavers. Officers said they were working with Planning on a tree mitigation plan, to plant more trees around Archers Wood and the beaver's enclosure.
- b. The amount of waste at Forty Hill Farm. Officers stated that they were reminding the farm that the waste needs removing.
- c. A question was received in relation to how the rain gardens would be properly maintained. Officers stated that they were working with colleagues in the maintenance team to ensure that once these schemes were passed on, they had the training and knowhow to look after them. It was expressed that some of what had been planted was lower maintenance, and that a longer hand over period was being adopted, to allow what had been planted time to establish properly; become more mature and make it easier to look after. He conveyed that they were looking to produce information which explained the benefits of different types of vegetation in these schemes, and highlighted that there was a balance between perceptions about what looks good, and what should be planted/ has a range of ecological advantages.
- d. The Forum queried if the woodland trees being planted were different types. Officers responded that the forestry commission funding enabled diversity in planting; 70% had to be productive species, but around 30 different types of trees had been planted and these were all native species.
- e. It was pointed out that last year had been very dry, and it was asked whether the percentage loss of newly planted trees, and how they would be replaced, had been assessed. The officer replied that last year had been a severe drought and they overplant trees, knowing not all of them will mature, which was best practice, and the recommended density to create a thriving wood in the future. Regular surveys were conducted, and around a 30% average loss had been suffered last year, which was significant but not catastrophic; and the trees that survived the stress would be able to do it again. It was highlighted that they plant in winter to give them the best chance of getting their roots in ground and absorbing water, and that they had considered irrigation but found it not feasible/ unsustainable.

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- f. A member asked if there was a more environmentally friendly alternative to the plastic covers being used to protect the younger trees. The officer said the tubes were used sparingly, most trees had been surrounded in a block by deer fence instead; that they had considered alternatives, but found the plastic was more reliable and would be reused/ recycled.
- g. A question was asked about how project maintenance would be conducted differently this year, and how the teams budget gets proportioned, as many parks had lots of rubbish. Officers responded that taller vegetation, and wetlands excavated into the ground captured wind-blown litter, which posed a challenge; all parks have a maintenance programme, and they aim to remove all the rubbish. The Director of Environment & Operational Services explained they had restructured services, having recognised that moving from project to maintenance was difficult, with the two being in different areas previously, so joined them up, and hoped this should allow for improvements going forward.
- h. It was asked what the likelihood of the beavers having babies was. Officers replied that it was a possibility, and footage of the beavers mating existed, but that they were only young, so the chance this would be successful was lower. They explained that this would not be known until May/June time, and that they had a good animal manager working with them, but it was thought to be unlikely this year.
- i. There was a query about the opportunity/scope for Pymmes Brooke trail footpath to go through Wilbury Wetlands, to which officers said they were looking at securing funding to do this.
- j. The Forum enquired if signage could be added to Boundary Park, and if this could be in mileage. Officers stated that the first phase of work had taken place at Boundary Park last year and was looking at improving the footpath, and the second phase which would take place this summer would look at improving entrances, signage, wayfinding, making it feel more inviting and potentially adding seating. The signage at the London loop had been in km but the officer noted the preference for mileage.
- k. The deterioration and silting of Mossops Creek were pointed out, officers said that there were no plans at present to address this, and that what could be done, depended on who the owner was, and they did not have this information to hand.
- l. A member raised that the laying of tarmac as opposed to building pavements across the borough, creates water runoff. This along with building on the green belt, and the planned Broxbourne to Enfield cycle link would remove greenery and reverse/undo green work elsewhere. Officers said they consult with other departments and try to find a balance between the competing interests of new infrastructure and public spaces. The officer acknowledged the point about footpaths, as paving with sand in between would soak in lower levels of rain better than tarmac. On the cycle lane, he hoped that vegetation would be planted alongside the path, to offset the loss in greenery.
- m. A question was asked regarding what would happen if the cattle GPS suffered a power cut/ runs out battery. Ian conveyed that the collars

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send an alert when they are low on battery and have a small solar panel on the collars which keep them ticking over for a while.

- n. It was asked if money had been ring fenced for the maintenance of New River; the officers said that it had been, and work was being planned.
- o. A query was received in relation to the works being conducted at Chase Green on New River, and what state/ conditions the revetments were in. Officers said that some work had been done on the revetments last year, as well as on desilting and footpath improvements, and that the total spend of this was £300,000. They explained that this year they had a budget of £100,000, with which there were planned footpath improvements, the aim of completing revetments and pump repairs, and that they were starting to work towards a larger desilting exercise. Ian said they had replaced lots of the revetments last year and that all of those still in a poor condition, they would hope to replace this year.
- p. The Forum enquired what the maintenance plan was for the wetlands area in Town Park. Officers replied that wetlands should be cut back every three years, and ideally a third would be cut back every year on a cyclical basis.
- q. Attendees queried what the environment team's relationship with the water authority was like, and if they would be notified by them, if there was a pump failure. Officers informed members that they had a better relationship with Thames Water, and were in frequent contact with them, but on occasion the council had not been made aware of planned works.
- r. It was asked how officers pick the rain park sites, and if people could put forward suggestions for locations. Officers conveyed that some were dictated as nuisance flooding locations, that others were identified as the best locations through hydraulic modelling of the borough, and that some were based on other projects presenting an opportunity to incorporate rain parks into. They could take on board suggestions but emphasised the high costs; it was made clear they wanted to distribute more information about rain parks, and ask the public for their site suggestions alongside this.
- s. A member asked about the impact on the boroughs carbon footprint from cattle. Officers advised that cows do produce environmentally harmful methane, but that they also eat carbon captured in the grass, and that they form part of an ecological process/ chain.
- t. An enquiry was made as to how Ian hands over his projects to maintenance once they have been engineered. It was explained that since the restructure, the teams work much closer together, which has resulted in a more seamless transition. Officers said there was a management plan for each wetland, that staff receive training, and they were looking at the potential for having a dedicated officer embedded in the management team, to make sure they were being implemented properly.
- u. It was asked whether the wetlands on the highway were maintained/ managed by the parks or highways team, to which officers responded that it was the Parks team.

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- v. Following a field fire at Forty Hill last year, concerns were expressed over how cattle would be managed as part of the conservation grazing trial. Officers explained that there would be a grazing manager who monitors the data. The GPS control was no different to fencing, in that if the cows were in fear for their life, they would break through the barrier, at which point the grazing manager would be alerted, as they would effectively be on call and respond at any time. Protocols and contingency arrangements would be in place, and risk assessments, mitigation and business continuity plans would be done.

5. REWILDING

As agreed, this item was discussed and presented on alongside the Green and Blue Infrastructure item.

6. HERITAGE

RECEIVED a presentation from Christine White, Heritage & Urban Design Manager, who updated the Forum on heritage at risk, in the borough.

The following comments and questions were received, which officers responded to:

- a. A question was received with regards to how often officers had to intervene with carrot and stick measures. The officer responded that the stick approach had been used in a number of cases in which urgent works notices were issued to protect buildings. In some instances, if the owners did not comply, the council would have to step-in in default but that this was not done lightly, due to budgets and recovery of funds through the courts; the carrot technique was mentioned as involving raising funding priority.
- b. It was asked what festival programmes were planned for Trent Park. The officer replied that there was a steering group that look at this, which Cllr James chairs, and is attended by a member of the conservation group, along with other stakeholders. It was said the only festival planned for Trent Park this year was the Ghana and Mauritius festival, and that this was a question for the steering group.
- c. There was a query how Verena McCaig fit in with Broomfield House. The officer advised that Verena McCaig was the Heritage at Risk Officer at Historic England; and that for council owned entries on the register, Historic England put themselves down as the contact, and for privately owned heritage at risk queries the council is put down as the contact. This was followed up by an enquiry if the contacts on the list were all from Historic England, to which officers explained the list detailed Enfield's entries on the Heritage at Risk register; a document compiled by Historic England.
- d. A member asked, with regards to registered parks and gardens, where Enfield ranked on the league table. The officer responded that Enfield had five parks/gardens, of which four were registered, but did not know the comparison of this relative to other boroughs. It was confirmed that

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the four which were registered were all council owned, and that the one which was not was owned by Lee Valley Park.

- e. It was then queried if the Director of Environment & Operational Services could commit to getting Forty Hall back to the base line condition that needs to be achieved, before introducing grounds maintenance. Officers replied that the intention would be to produce a management and activity plan to give Historic England confidence that through various workstreams, things were moving forward. This was followed up by an enquiry as to what the timescales for this would be, to which officers said they did not know, but could come back with.
- f. The Forum asked if the works on Trent Park terrace and landscape were part of the planning permission and section 106 agreement and had time conditions. The officer confirmed this to be the case for the part of the site in Barkley's ownership, and that the wider country park was Enfield's responsibility.
- g. A question was received with regards to who owned North Lodge previously, and what confidence officers had that Tottenham Hotspur were going to resolve the issues. The officer responded that it was privately owned previously, and that they could only follow the rules/regulations and deal with any matters as they arise.
- h. Forum members enquired if a possible resolution regarding Lavender Hill Cemetery Chapel, was to convert/market it as residential usage, as they felt it was better properly preserved and maintained, than left rotting. The officer advised that a site meeting was set for May with Historic England, and a historic building preservation trust was coming to see if there were any possible projects/interests. It was expressed that a range of options were being explored, the fact that it was positioned near the edge of the road rather than in the middle of the cemetery was a positive quality, and members queried what input they could have in deciding what happened to these sites.
- i. It was asked if a change of use application had been submitted for Southgate House, and if conditions would be placed on it, requiring the building to be restored. The officer said she was unaware of any applications being made yet, that the change in ownership was relatively new, and that they would look to have the condition of the building returned to a suitable state of repair.
- j. A question was received regarding if the depth of the detail of the original listing determined the conditions for preservation. Christine responded that the listing protected both the inside and outside of buildings. She said the list entries were originally just for the purpose of identifying the building, and were not exhaustive of everything of interest, and they would always argue it did not matter if something were not in there, it would still be of interest, but that the fuller the description the better. It was explained that any application for works would need to have heritage considerations, and that in the case of Southgate House, there was a lot of documentation regarding the building.
- k. A member queried, in respect of Holly Hill Farm, how they work with property services to keep buildings properly maintained. The officer replied that they chase them, that urgent works notices were not

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usually used in these circumstances, but instead they engage/broker meetings with Historic England, who review the portfolios progress, and support the work being done. Funding had been made available for repairs, and the condition survey was being updated so repairs could be timetabled, with a planned inspection by Historic England, due to take place in May.

- I. The Forum enquired if the high-density of at-risk buildings around Church and Fore Street was due to the owners not having the money to maintain them, and if so, what could be done to alleviate the situation. The officer replied with a summary in which she outlined the heritage at risk in and around the Edmonton area. It was asked if the conservation areas in that part of the borough had local study groups. It was advised that they did not, but the Enfield Society had done lots of works to engage the community in Edmonton with regards to heritage.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

NOTED the completion of the work programme for 2022/23, and that the 2023/24 work programme would be discussed at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

Members asked for more conservation and public travel issues to be considered on the next work programme. The Chair replied that members set the work programme together at the start of the municipal year, and that all issues would be discussed and considered at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

NOTED that the dates of future meetings would be confirmed following Annual Council on 10 May 2023.

The meeting ended at 8.58 pm.