

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

MINUTES

Tuesday 16 July 2019

PRESENT: Councillors: Dhadwal (Chair), Anand, Anjum, Chohan, Kumar (Vice-Chair), Mahmood, Malcolm, Padda.

Ealing Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains	- Scrutiny Review Officer
Paula Portas	- Democratic Services Officer
Chris Welsh	- Parks Operation Manager

1. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Summers, Gillian Marston (Director of Environment), Carole Stewart (Assistant Director Arts, Libraries and Heritage), and Jackie Fisk (Senior Change and Transformation Officer), had tendered their apologies prior to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private (Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Panel Terms of Reference and Work Programme 2019-20 (Agenda Item 4)

The Scrutiny Officer presented this item asking if the Panel had any comments on the draft terms of reference and Outline Work Programme.

Panel members made the following comments and suggestions:

- The participation of Ealing Street Pastors. It was noted that they would be invited to the next meeting to explain about their work. There would possibly be a visit organised with them.
- The Panel should scrutinise the Council's consultation procedures and post Ward Forums.
- The Panel should consider inviting the following volunteer organisations to a meeting: Canal and River Trust, Let's Go Southall, Southall Green,
- There were no suggestions for co-option.

Resolved: That

- I. the Terms of Reference of the Panel be agreed;
- II. referring the Terms of Reference to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval be agreed;
- III. the provisional Work Programme be agreed; and
- IV. approved the agenda items and actions for the next meeting, due to be held on 19 September 2019.

5. Neighbourhoods Outcome Review.
(Agenda Item 5)

Chris Welsh, Parks Operations Manager, was invited to present the Neighbourhoods Outcome Review. He focused on the parks and green spaces aspect of the report.

Parks played a key role in the Active Citizen's strategy, supporting community engagement and participation in a range of activities such as food growing, community events, wildlife monitoring and habitat improvements, volunteer gardening and maintenance, litter picking, arts activities, outdoor education and forest school.

Officers expected that an increasingly empowered community and devolving management would reduce maintenance costs while aiming to maintain quality.

There were three main areas of activity: litter picking, volunteering in parks and devolving parks and open spaces management.

A substantial proportion of site budget was allocated to rubbish collection, so community involvement can make a major impact on a site's day to day running costs. Litter picking had a range of engagement initiatives on the ground:

- A. Better Points 'Love Parks' Programme. This was a free app that residents could download and join the Love Your Park rewards programme. The programme rewarded residents of Ealing for getting out and about and being pro-active in Ealing's parks. Participants could exchange the BetterPoints earned to reward themselves with vouchers with high street retailers or donate them to charities. The programme started in June 2018 and would be trialled for 15 to 18 months. Preliminary results were positive.
- B. Plogolution. This was an organisation set up to help support and promote active and engaged communities dedicated to protecting the environment, getting rubbish off our streets, parks, waterways, etc. Plogolution had been commissioned to deliver 9 Plogs (run/walk and rubbish pick up) events around Ealing in 2019. So far 3 plogs had been held: January in Northala (60 participants); Brent Lodge Park (25 participants); Pitzhanger Park (22 participants), with plenty of rubbish collected at each event. This was a total of

214 hours of picking by 107 people. Officers were looking to engage running clubs such as the Ealing Eagles in this work as a way to enhance participation.

- C. 2 Minute Litter Pick boards with pickers. Boards had been installed into 30 parks associated with the Better Points Love Your Parks programme. The boards were stocked with pickers and, after receiving feedback on social media that there were no bags provided (we preferred that users bring their own bags), now they were stocked with a few compostable bags at a time. There were social media prompts on the board to encourage users to share their activity across different platforms.

The feedback on social media has been mixed, with some pickers reported stolen, but anecdotal evidence from the cafes in Walpole and Pitshanger Park that oversee the boards suggest they are well used, particularly by dog walkers. The Park Rangers were responsible for re-stocking the boards.

- D. One off events and partnership working: Ranger-led walks; groups and organisations leading litter-picks. Some litter-picking events were held during 2019, often in partnership with other organisations and groups, including Greenwayers; Canal Rivers Trust, Thames 21, LAGER Can, Ealing Mencap, Southall Transition, Southall Alliance, corporate volunteers, Good Gym, Scouts, Friends of Horsenden Hill. Some of these groups were now programming regular litter-picking into their activities or corporate social responsibility actions.
- E. Rangers giving out and individuals requesting litter pickers. Rangers had face-to-face, regular contact with park users and had used this knowledge and experience to target regular park users (e.g. dog walkers) to litter pick and to give pickers to people who have shown interest and commitment. To date rangers had given out 40 individual pickers, which approximate to around 1,500 hours of picking from Jan–June 2019 (averaged at 30 mins, 3 times a week).
- F. Social media and comms. (Great British Spring Clean, Council, Do Something Good/Bubble, Facebook neighbourhood groups, LAGER Can) to promote and campaign. Officers had used both national awareness campaigns and local communications to raise awareness and increase participation in litter-action activities and events and volunteering.

Volunteering in Parks

The Parks Team had a good record of volunteering, particularly at sites where there has been dedicated staff for example Walpole Park and Manager where there were approximately 5,000 hours of horticultural and wildlife volunteering per year and Horsenden Hill, where there was strong, motivated Friends Group producing around 3,000 hours of volunteering per year.

Whilst, there were no records of previous years for comparison, in 2019 around 10,000 hours of volunteering from over 950 individuals had been recorded. Projects in this area would be, for instance, that run by Greenwayers, a community-led group

that had received training from Thames 21 to safely lead their own river clean up events. Officers supported them by providing promotional and logistical support and waste collections following events.

Devolving Parks and Open Spaces Management

Ealing was working with the organisations South West London Environmental Network and Shared Assets to progress the creation of new Friends groups and supporting existing groups to take on elements of devolved management, including the Blondin Consortium and Friends of Horsenden Hill.

The Chair thanked Chris Welsh for his presentation and invited Panel members to comment and ask questions.

Members:

- Noted that community organised litter picking events had suffered delays due to the difficulty in getting the tools from the Council to enable volunteers to work and the fairly small number of tools that were eventually provided. Heard that officers recognised and understood the frustration. The department was examining the possibility of installing containers in specific areas, accessible via a code to the door, in the borough where people could pick up tools but also providing a space to change or make a cup of tea, as it was recognised that part of the value of volunteering resided in it being a social activity. This was as yet an aspiration. Besides, from next year, when the new LATCO was in place, the Council would have more flexibility in providing tools to residents. Presently, some tools were obtained through AMEY, which requested ample notice to be given to them.
- Commented that there were litter picking machines now being shown in tool exhibitions that could be of interest to park rangers.
- Noted that Barons Pond had not been mentioned in the report. Heard that the sites mentioned were not exhaustive. Work had been carried out in Barons Pond. Some of the work planned there via Highways team in Transport for London included flood management.
- Queried how successful the social media strategy had been. Heard that previously, rangers were contacted via a mail inbox. Now the department had Facebook accounts and had joined social media groups for relevant activities. This way officers were engaging with residents in the borough. The website Do Something Good also referred residents to the Park Department.
- Asked about the level of engagement with volunteers. Heard that engagement fluctuated depending on the organisation. Officers tried to help organisations in becoming more sustainable and invested time and effort with many.
- Queried the level of savings that were estimated from these activities. Heard that now rangers and AMEY were involved in the activities, as they would need to attend sites to collect litter/empty bags. The main objective of the initiatives was to change the perception of residents around litter, eventually it was expected that would reduce the department's workload by producing less waste in the first place. The department's target was to reduce the park waste budget by 25%. But those sorts of savings had not been materialised yet.
- Asked what challenges had the department faced in carrying out these initiatives, Heard that they were very recent. One challenge had been the own

park rangers' initial attitude to them, as most were sceptical that they could work. Now most rangers were supportive.

- Queried whether most activities were led by a ranger. Heard that that was the case in most events, but not always. The department did not have a specific budget for the events so they had been using revenue or park funding to carry them out. They had an officer tasked with promoting corporate volunteering, so not all activities were about active citizens.
- Asked how young people were engaged in these events. Heard that there was a fair amount of engagement with primary schools as these events and activities were part of their curriculum. The same was not true of secondary schools. Some engagement had happened with secondary schools as a result of their pupils being caught littering.
- Noted that the department could engage with ward councillors and other departments about these events.

As the Parks Operations Manager was not familiar with Ealing Council Neighbourhoods Research which was appended to the report, the Panel deferred this to the next meeting of the Panel.

Resolved: That

- I. the presentation on Active Citizens in Parks and Green Spaces be received.
- II. the appropriate officers, and if possible representation from Year Here which had conducted the research, to attend the next meeting to present their findings.

6. Date of Next Meeting
(Agenda Item 6)

The next meeting of the Panel was due to take place on Thursday 19 September 2019.

Councillor Karanvir Singh Dhadwal, Chair.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.