

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 4 – FUTURE EALING

MINUTES

Wednesday 5 December 2018

PRESENT: Councillors: Dierdre Costigan (Chair), Sitarah Anjum, Jaskiran Chohan, Kamaljit Dhindsa, Amarjit Jammu, Gary Malcolm (Vice-Chair), Gurmit Mann and Karam Mohan.

Ealing Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains	- Scrutiny Review Officer
Chris Bunting	- Assistant Director of Leisure Services
Gillian Marston	- Director of Environment
Kieran Read	- Director of Strategy and Engagement
Lucy Taylor	- Director of Regeneration and Planning
Lee Teasdale	- Democratic Services Officer
Adam Whalley	- Assistant Director, Capital Investment Programme, Major Project and Development

Other Attendees:

Chris Carrington	- Community Roadwatch Volunteer, Southfield Ward
Alexander Kenmure	- Head of Business Development, GoodGym Ealing
Lynda O'Hare	- Chair, Friends of Horsenden Hill
Amanda Rutkowski	- Co-founder, Katherine Buchan Meadow Project

1. Apologies for Absence

(Agenda Item 1)

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 03.10.2018

(Agenda Item 4)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2018 be agreed as a true and correct record.

5. Future Ealing – Active Citizen (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited Gillian Marston (Director of Environment) to introduce a report on the Future Ealing 'Active Citizen' scheme and how it was looking to involve the borough's residents in the development of the scheme.

It was advised that an element of the Future Ealing strategic vision was to enable residents to be as self-sufficient as possible, with the aim of improving outcomes for residents, including increased resilience and self-determination, whilst reducing demand on public services.

To inform the future direction of travel, a small-scale Active Citizen pilot had explored how the Council was currently enabling residents, and how social action and participation could be increased – including what this would mean to residents, the role of the Council and its relationship with residents. The preparedness of residents to contribute was evident, and the knowledge and understanding of what was required to support and sustain positive involvement was increasing.

Whilst there was clear evidence of residents' willingness to get involved – the level of public participation and social action in Ealing still had the potential to increase. Work was taking place on building understanding of residents' motivations for getting and remaining involved and the culture needed in the Council to support this.

The scale of the take-up in the pilot had varied by area. Areas that had historically seen more engagement on active citizenship were predictably those that had been most receptive so far.

The Panel was then introduced to residents who had been engaging with the Active Citizen pilot – who were invited to give presentations on the work they had been undertaking.

Friends of Horsenden Hill – Lynda O'Hare

This project was inaugurated in the summer of 2016 following the encouragement of the local park ranger.

The friends were made up of a lead committee of ten members, supported by a growing number of regular volunteers and 50 paying members who voted for the lead committee through an annual AGM. The group had a Facebook page with an ever-increasing following, with the number now being over 600 followers.

Lots of work had taken place during 2018 – this including completing work on pathways and vegetable beds, enabling more people to enjoy the community gardens thanks to an award of £5,000 from Tesco's 'Bags of Help' campaign. £9,000 had been received in ward forum funding – this had allowed for public toilet restoration, walking trail restoration and a hayloft refurbishment. Events had taken place such as a woodland craft day, an apple day and a series of guided walks. A key highlight was an 'outstanding' vote from London in Bloom.

An extensive volunteer network was now in place. This included students from Belvue School who kept the farm tidy and managed a herb bed every Friday during

term time. Volunteers such as GoodGym were regular visitors. Staff from organisations including the Discovery Channel, Bloomberg, Barclays Plc and HSBC got a day away from the workplace to help with fence laying and other essential tasks. Many local people got involved in tasks from weeding to major repairs at regular community volunteer days.

Gardening groups were hosted and supervised by Mindfood and Neighbourly Care. Through the groups, gardeners grew their own produce and learnt new skills. Many of these gardeners had little or no outdoor space of their own and therefore looked forward to social interaction outdoors. Mindfood had solid evidence of how these sessions improved mental health and wellbeing.

Transform Your Space – Katherine Buchan Meadow – Amanda Rutkowski

This project sought to get residents involved with shaping their local area. The purpose of the project was to change the historic space at Katherine Buchan Meadow into somewhere the whole community could enjoy and value.

Ms Rutkowski emphasised how much the Council had helped with the ‘technical’ elements of the project. The Council had agreed to hold on to the budget of £47k as it would have been difficult for the project founders to manage alone and helped with the organisation of a schedule of works to make best use of the budget. The results of the community work on the Meadow resulted in a community Green Flag Award and a Britain in Bloom ‘outstanding’ rating.

Active Citizen – Ealing Parks

Chris Bunting (Assistant Director of Leisure Services) advised how officers were working to scale up the good work being undertaken. Indices were being worked up to determine the most appealing parks and areas in which the local demographic could take a lead role. Pilot sites included Acton Park, Blondin Park, Conolly Dell and Manor Court Green.

The Ealing Parks Foundation objectives were highlighted to the Panel. These were:

- Preservation, conservation and protection of the green spaces
- Provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life
- Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities through developing and supporting social and physical activities in green spaces which also support the preservation of those spaces
- Develop self-sustaining green spaces through developing active community engagement in the management and maintenance of such spaces
- Pursue such other charitable purposes consistent with the above as the Trustees in their absolute discretion shall determine

Ealing Council had teamed up with ‘BetterPoints’ to bring an innovative rewards programme to Ealing residents and their local green spaces. The BetterPoints ‘Love Your Park’ was a one-year funded pilot as part of Ealing’s Pride in my Park initiative. The programme rewarded residents of Ealing for being pro-active in a variety of the borough’s parks. It rewarded voluntary litter picking, gardening and joining a Friends

of Park group, via the BetterPoints free mobile phone app. Participants could reward themselves with vouchers for a number of high street retailers, or donate them to a variety of local and national charities.

Also referenced was the '#2minute Litter Pick' movement. This involved placing boards in parks which contained bags that could be used to litter pick (with a litter picker also being attached to the boards). Ealing had purchased 30 of these boards to date.

The Active Citizen Volunteer Programme was highlighted. This outlined opportunities available for residents and stakeholders to get involved in their local area and increase participation and social action in the borough. The opportunities tended to vary due to the changes in seasons, with winter offering the largest variety of opportunities.

Questions

The Chair then invited questions from Panel Members on the points raised so far.

Councillor Malcolm referred to crowd funding and the complexities that needed to be overcome to successfully pursue this. Were tips and examples of good practice shared with the community so that they could make use of this advice.

It was advised that targets had been lowered on community expectations around crowd funding, and it was agreed that it was good to get the message out on this. It was also advised that the 'Grant Finder Database' was a useful tool for sourcing funding for community projects.

Councillor Chohan referred to a site evaluation table being used to establish the areas of the borough most likely to be receptive to Active Citizen opportunities. How was this ranking established and what were the metrics behind it? How could it then be used in a wider sense?

It was advised that the evaluation table did not have any scientific basis – instead it had been created based on experience, demographics and existing community organisations. It would be refined over time as more was learnt about the groups involved. The focus of the table was particularly aimed at helping the parks team. Any community approach would of course be welcomed.

Councillor Jammu referred to the '#2minute Litter Pick' scheme – stating that 30 boards were a good start but would not go very far towards addressing the scale of involvement sought.

It was advised that if the scheme worked well it could be grown further. Ideally, each board needed an 'owner'.

Councillor Jammu suggested that residents' associations may be able to lead on the ownership – and that spreading more information about the scheme would be helpful, such as setting up stalls at local events.

Councillor Mohan enquired as to the type of challenges faced in getting the Friends of Horsenden Hill project up and running.

Lynda O'Hare advised that there had been many challenges, and the ambition of the local community had often exceeded what could be delivered. An initial challenge had been finding the right people to help out who could be relied upon to be dedicated to the longer term of the project.

The Chair and the Panel thanked Ms O'Hare and Ms Rutkowski for their contribution to the meeting, and acknowledged the work undertaken by their groups and the successes of their projects.

GoodGym – Alexander Kenmure

Mr Kenmure stated that the idea of GoodGym had come about after realising that many people found regular gyms to be 'dispiriting places' which led to consideration of how physical activity could be tied closer to community settings.

Weekly group runs were organised in which small groups of runners were matched household tasks they could undertake for elderly members of community, for example, gardening work.

Coach Runs were highlighted. These involved runners stopping off during their runs to visit isolated older people. The older people became coaches to the runners, helping to provide extra motivation to run and sharing their wisdom with the runner. Coach runners had clocked up almost 7,000 coach runs to over 700 older people and more coaches were being referred each week.

A milestone and badge attainment system was used to allow runners to keep track of their deeds and work through an achievement system which encouraged them to keep going.

The project had been operating for over two years now, and there had been some close consideration of what more the project could be doing. As part of this, it was important to fully consider the 'impact vs fun' element – were there risks that GoodGym could end up becoming 'a service'? As people participated because they wanted to, but they would not want to feel that they 'have to' do it and were fully depended upon to keep going. Therefore, there needed to be work on how GoodGym mapped into the Council's needs.

Community Road Watch Southfield – Chris Carrington

Community Road Watch (CRW) was a joint Transport for London and Metropolitan Police initiative that involved local volunteers. The aim of CRW was to educate drivers about the existence of the local speed limits and to encourage them to obey it, thus improving road safety.

The Police provided the community volunteers with a speed gun that could record details of vehicles doing 25mph or above (in 20mph zones). Warning letters were sent to those caught doing excessive speeds. However, this was a community scheme and not legally enforceable, and there was no further engagement with the drivers. This was intended as a warning to them to be more aware of their speed.

There were 20 plus volunteers with the CRW in Southfield, who plan on undertaking at least 2 hours of CRW each week. This usually consisted of two volunteers plus a police officer. Mr Carrington liaised with the Police and volunteers to co-ordinate the monthly programme.

Since May 2017 over 100 hours of volunteer work had taken place, with 3,876 vehicles (21% of the total) having been caught at 25mph or more. This equated to an average of 39 vehicles per hour. It was considered that a successful 20mph scheme could only be considered as such when that was the mean speed, and where only 15% of vehicles were found travelling at 25mph or more. By such criteria only one of the main roads through Southfield could be considered successful.

Looking forward, the CRW would continue, and would press for improved signage locally with vehicle-activated signs, speed cameras, more aggressive physical traffic calming measures and better signage related to police enforcement.

Questions

The Chair then invited further questions and comments from Panel Members.

Councillor Anjum asked if the CRW speed checks were always undertaken during a particular time of the day, and if this had an impact upon the statistics.

Mr Carrington advised that there was not a set pattern other than that there was a conscious effort to record at times when traffic was quieter, and therefore people were more likely to drive faster.

Councillor Malcolm referred to the badge and milestone system for GoodGym stating that this was a good motivational system. Were these attained via apps?

It was confirmed that this was the case. When a person signed up they were given their profile through which achievements were collated, akin to other exercise recording apps such as Fitbit and Strava.

Councillor Chohan asked how CRW and GoodGym went about recruiting people to their projects.

Mr Carrington explained that CRW recruited through word of mouth. Personally, he had been on the police panel in the Southfield Ward and heard about CRW schemes through this, several of his peers were interested in taking this up in Southfield, so started a small group. The group spoke about its activities at the local ward forum and through that gained several more volunteers. Information about their work was also disseminated through the neighbourhood watch, the local press, local newsletters, and councillor circulars.

Mr Kenmure concurred that word of mouth was probably the most helpful method of recruitment. A member of the group had an article featured in Good Housekeeping magazine, which proved to be a great recruitment tool. It was felt that being able to 'tap into the current zeitgeist' was helpful.

Councillor Chohan noted that 'Let's Go Southall' would be looking to embrace similar themes and that information sharing could be beneficial to both projects. The Assistant Director of Leisure Services confirmed that this was already happening.

The Chair and the Panel thanked Mr Carrington and Mr Kenmure for explaining their projects to the Panel and expressed appreciation of their continued hard work.

Questions to Officers

Councillor Dhindsa referred to the devolving of parks and open spaces to local groups. Had there been much volunteering take-up in Southall so far?

It was advised that because it was still quite early in the programme, there were no statistics available on this presently. However, officers were looking at targeted work and allocation of resources to attract and engage with groups who may not come forward in usual circumstances.

Councillor Anjum asked if there had been related work around digitalisation. It was advised that whilst the Active Citizen initiative was not dependent on digital, there were some directly relevant connections between it and the Digital Strategy that would be worked on.

Councillor Chohan suggested that it may be a useful exercise to develop maps akin to that prepared for the parks for all departments. How would the outcomes for Active Citizen be formed, who would form them, and how would the outcomes be measured? There needed to be a concrete idea of what the support provided would be and of how the actions would happen.

It was advised that Active Citizen involved a very different approach, and no other Council could say that this was a model they had used directly, and due to this there was no definitive knowledge of what the expected outcomes might be. This was a new direction for the Council, and a decision was still to be taken by the administration on whether to take the programme further. There was a vast amount of work to do with residents on co-designs in the preliminary stages, building towards huge projects. It was hoped that a clearer picture would be developed on expected outcomes but there was a lot of work to be done to get there.

The Chair asked about capacity in scaling up the work on Active Citizen if the opportunities were there. She also enquired about the 'Bubble' website – what were the current issues and what plans were in place to improve it?

It was advised that a report early in the new year would detail information around fast-tracking approaches for strong opportunities. Some learning had been taken from work in Barking and Dagenham on potentials around scaling up. There was capacity to scale up where investment opportunities had been found and there would be a later report on investment proposals. The Bubble website (used to promote volunteering in an attractive and desirable manner) needed to be pushed out and advertised more so that the public knew it was there.

Resolved: That

- (i) the report about developments around Active Citizen be received; and

- (ii) thanks be expressed by the Panel to the representatives of Friends of Horsenden Hill, Katherine Buchan Meadow, GoodGym and Community Road Watch for their projects engaging with the Active Citizen ethos.

6. Update on the Property Assets Review (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair invited Lucy Taylor (Director of Regeneration and Planning) to provide an update to the Panel on the Council's property assets review.

The Property Assets and Neighbourhood Offer Programme aimed to deliver a mixture of financial and non-financial benefits in the short, medium and long-term. A key aim was to make more effective use of the Council's assets. This included considering their role in the delivery of community outcomes as well as enabling an effective contribution to the Council's priorities, including affordable housing and generating income and savings.

At the beginning of the year as part of the first phase, the team had looked at 80 property assets, out of a total of 400. Each of the assets went through a hierarchy of what was happening within the asset, how important the asset was, how services within it could be delivered in a different way, whether co-location could be an option and if the asset was coming to an end of its usable life.

It was considered that if an asset did not meet the criteria for continued use, then it should be sold for capital gains rather than being a liability to the Council.

A recent successful bid to the Greater London Authority (GLA) for the affordable housing grant provided an opportunity to fund the delivery of affordable housing using Council land that had been identified through the Property and Assets Programme. Four sites had been earmarked for early delivery of affordable housing within the GLA grant programme which would be used to contribute towards construction costs.

Questions

The Chair expressed thanks for the presentation and invited Panel Members to comment and ask questions.

Councillor Malcolm spoke about the need for a One Council approach. He asked what happened when an opportunity arose around properties that would be 'affordable' but not 'truly affordable' as per the internal policy changes. He also commented that there needed to be appropriate communications when an asset, such as a community centre for example, fell out of use so that the public was not left irate by what could appear to be asset stripping.

It was confirmed that there had been issues around Carlton Road where the Council had not been informed about GP requirements – this issue had been rectified and the Council now met and joined up more with CCG health partners. Close analysis had taken place on how the Council could do more co-locating in future. With regards to affordability of housing, the Council's direct delivery programme looked at affordable housing. In general all 'affordable' was at least affordable to someone and it was

good to have a mix of properties. Every potential site would need to have viability tests.

Councillor Anjum asked for further detail on the situation with Pitshanger Library.

As the Library was not Council owned, it was not an asset that could be considered for selling. There had been an extension of the lease at the Library and officers were looking at other options currently whilst the lease was extended.

Councillor Chohan asked about the availability of data, and whether officers were comfortable with taking decisions when there was a lack of detailed data.

It was advised that this had been noted as a current weakness. But the vast majority of the recommendations agreed by the Cabinet in July 2018 had been to undertake further feasibility studies.

Resolved: That the update on the Council's property assets review be received by the Panel.

7. Panel Operations Report (Agenda Item 7)

The Panel was presented with previously requested documentation, including the RAG status of tracked Future Ealing projects and the Council's Digital Strategy Business Case report.

Panel Members were also presented with feedback from the site visit to Wigan Council to consider their 'The Deal' project.

Resolved: That the update work programme be received.

8. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 7)

The next meeting of the Panel was due to take place on Thursday 28 February 2019.

Councillor Deirdre Costigan, Chair.

The meeting ended at 9:35pm.