

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

The Economy, Arts, Sports, and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 24 July 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rory Vaughan (Chair), Adam Peter Lang, Ashok Patel and Jackie Borland

Other Councillors:
None in attendance

Officers:
Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment)
Simon Ingyon (Assistant Director Parks and Leisure)
Paul Smith (Sports Development Officer)
Ian Hawthorn (Assistant Director Highways)
Jessica Bastock (Service Manager Healthy Streets)
Eugene McGee (Arboricultural Officer)
Charles Francis (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Jon Pickstone (Strategic Director of Economy), Councillor Andrew Jones (Cabinet Member for the Economy), Councillor Sharon Holder (Cabinet Member for the Public Realm) and Councillor Liz Collins.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee meeting held on 29 March 2023 were approved.

4. **UPDATE ON THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM**

Simon Ingyon, Assistant Director Parks and Leisure, introduced the item. He explained that the draft strategy and action plan was close to completion, but that officers were seeking the Committee's views on the five priorities of the new strategy.

He provided a presentation which covered the following aspects:

- An overview of the five key elements, integral to the strategy
- The strategy vision and structure
- Successes and ongoing areas of work
- The links to the Health and Well-Being Priorities
- The proposed themes for the new strategy
- Areas of work for new strategy themes
- The next steps

Councillor Adam Peter Lang highlighted that the previous week, the Council was awarded a further Green Flag award for Wormwood Scrubs. He asked about parks and leisure, the use of open spaces by young people and how officers envisioned these areas could be used creatively as part of the sport and physical activity strategy.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang commended rowing as an activity and the goal of offering this to all young people (in the borough), however, he asked if there were any perceived gaps such as skateboarding, mountain biking and walking football that had been missed from the list of activities. In addition, he highlighted the tight timescale for the strategy going out to consultation in September 2023 and whether officers were confident this was feasible and realistic. He highlighted it was important the Council considered how it would engage the community in the consultation process, in addition to the traditional route of canvassing sports clubs and societies.

In relation to young people, Simon Ingyon confirmed the Council worked closely with Young Hammersmith and Fulham which were one of the key stakeholder and consultation groups and it was noted the Council had a good working relationship with less traditional forms of sport forms like skateboarding. With regards to the tight consultation timeframe, Simon Ingyon confirmed officers would start the consultation process at the end of September which would last for between 4 and 6 weeks. The information which had been collected would then be consolidated in November 2023 and used to inform the final strategy. He was confident that there was sufficient time, as the Council had already been in contact with some of the consultees and they were aware of the process the Council was following. Finally, in relation to rowing, Simon Ingyon confirmed that this was a manifesto pledge and so it had been

specifically included, however, he was keen that children had the opportunity to experience a widespread range of sports in the future.

Councillor Ashok Patel commented that the challenge was to try and get young people off their screens (telephones and tablets) and on to playing fields. He asked if there was any reason community sport providers list did not include any schools. He also noted that schools were being encouraged to use public parks and whether this was part of the strategy. In response, Simon Ingyon confirmed that schools were already using park facilities, and one of the recommendations from the Parks Commission was to ensure that state schools had affordable and access to local park facilities. This goal had recently become even more key with its links to the climate change agenda, with those students which needed to be bused out of the borough to use playfields. The aspiration was to try and make facilities accessible within walking distance to try and reduce the carbon footprint of some of the borough's private schools that were transporting pupils out of borough. He explained that there were limited park facilities which needed to be shared in an equitable way and one of the challenges was the use of parks by schools and the general public. However, having brought the sports booking facility back in house, from the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, the Council was looking at the prioritisation and policy to ensure that state schools were favoured.

Simon Ingyon explained, further improvements included the investment in an all-weather pitch in Hurlingham Park, replacing the ones at Linford Christie Stadium and also, through the King's Coronation Youth Fund, to improve the athletics track to ensure it was fit for purpose for all schools' sports days next summer, as well as the Thames Valley Harriers Athletics Club. With regards to the CSPAN list and the omission of schools, Simon Ingyon explained that as CSPAN meetings were usually held in the middle of the day, and difficult for school's representatives to attend. Therefore, officers had invited the school's games organiser to the meetings, who was responsible for all primary and secondary school inter-school competitions. However, outside the CSPAN remit, Simon Ingyon confirmed the Council was working closely with Primary and Secondary schools on a week-by-week basis to ensure schools were linked with activities such as the London Youth Games.

Councillor Jackie Borland asked what was being done to ensure there was sufficient accessible green space within the borough that was not being used for organised sport. And secondly, whether the Council had looked at repurposing brown field or industrial sites, such as placing a skateboard park under the flyover.

In response, Simon Ingyon confirmed that informal recreation within parks and open spaces along the Thames Path and using the cycle networks were vital for commuting and daily exercise. The Park Walks Programme was also an important mechanism to encourage healthy exercise and link green spaces together. He confirmed that the Council had looked at a regeneration scheme under one of the flyovers in the borough, but, unfortunately, the Council was unsuccessful in securing the Government grant. Other work streams included upgrading several of the multi-use games areas, ball parks and increasing the number of out-door gyms in parks and green spaces.

The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan, explained that one of goals of the committee was to ensure there was co-production with disabled residents and this was taken forward in the development of the Sport And Physical Activity Strategy. He asked what lessons had been learnt from the previous strategy which might be taken forward in the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, for example promoting accessible physical activity for those that had been less active and what the measurable outcomes would be.

In response, Simon Ingyon confirmed officers would take on board the lessons learnt centrally on co-production. The Committee noted that officers had already engaged with the Disability Alliance and Dementia Action Alliance within the borough and ensured they were involved in workshops and forums as part of the consultation process. In terms of the lessons learnt from the previous strategy, there were a number of targeted programmes working with a variety of community groups who had not taken part in sports before (Dance West, London Sport Trust). And continuing to engage with children through initiatives like the daily mile (walking to school), making the least active, active, and ensuring that children had a variety of positive experiences through inter and intra school competition.

Another key area was continuing to support Hammersmith and Fulham's Community Workforce, the volunteers who helped deliver activity through the borough sports clubs, and ensuring they were valued and acknowledged through the annual / biannual sports award ceremony. In terms of outcomes and measures, Simon Ingyon explained that the most important one was the Active Lives Survey, supported by Sport England which had highlighted that Hammersmith and Fulham was the second most active London Borough. Officers would also continue to look at a number of metrics to measure how sport and activity could be increased and enhanced further in the future.

The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan, confirmed it would be useful and helpful to follow up on a number of the measures to increase sports / activity participation in the future when the Committee revisited the strategy.

Councillor Rory Vaughan asked how the opportunities for sport and physical activity were currently being communicated to residents and how this could be improved in the future, such as by celebrating achievements. In addition, he asked about how the Authority was working to deliver sports and physical activity on the fringes of the borough given its geography and very porous boundaries in some places. For example, Shepherd's Bush Cricket Club in Acton is but a 2-minute walk from the borough boundary, as well as Wormwood Scrubs bordering Brent and Acton.

In response, Simon Ingyon confirmed that as part of the new strategy, a Leisure Needs Facilities Needs Assessment, as well as Playing Pitch Strategy (working with Sport England and Consultants) would be delivered which would assess the facilities within the borough. Sports Development Officers would also continue to improve access to sport and physical activity through various forums.

In relation to communication, he explained more could always be done, as well as ensuring as many different formats as possible were used. He agreed that resources dependant, more could be done to celebrate achievements with the Council's

partners such as GLL and Virgin Active. Improving publicity and promotion, revamping the Council's website, as well as ensuring generic apps (as championed by London Sports) which sign posted users to where their local clubs were, were useful devices to improve access. The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan stated it was important to celebrate the work being done by people, especially the Community Volunteers and for various award ceremonies to be publicised.

Closing the item, the Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan confirmed the Committee welcomed the hard work which had been conducted on the strategy. There was clearly further work to be done on the consultation before the strategy went to Cabinet for consideration. He confirmed the Committee supported the priorities which had been set out and the committee looked forward to an update in about six months' time.

Resolved

1. That the Committee both note and comment on the report.

5. DRAFT TREE STRATEGY

Eugene McGee (Arboricultural Officer) introduced the draft tree strategy which had been compiled with a significant amount of input from internal and external stakeholders. He explained the rationale behind the strategy was that in 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and made a commitment to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. Trees are known to be highly efficient at reducing carbon emissions, and as a result, effective tree management has been weaved into both national and international policy. Eugene McGee provided details of Trees and Woodland Strategy toolkit (commissioned by Defra) which had been used to inform Hammersmith and Fulham's Tree Strategy.

Eugene McGee and Jessica Bastock (Service Manager Healthy Streets) provided a presentation which covered the following aspects:

- The need for a tree strategy.
- The structure of the tree strategy.
- The vision (and process for developing the vision) of the tree strategy.
- Delivering the vision.
- The Tree Strategy - next steps.
- Details of ongoing consultations.

The Committee noted that the strategy included three main aims: increasing the canopy cover, preserving and improving existing trees and working closely with residents and stakeholders. Details were provided of how these three core areas broke down into a further twelve sub-sections.

Councillor Ashok Patel asked three questions. Firstly, if officers could provide some idea of what the likely costs would be involved in the tree strategy (and to what extent was the Council relying on private funding). Secondly, he commented that he was surprised that Hammersmith and Fulham was only 28 greenest borough (out 32)

and asked for some feedback on that. And finally, he asked for further information to be provided on the private land (and the vision of planting one tiny forest per year and promoting Forest Schools). He asked how many Forest Schools there were currently.

In response, Eugene McGee explained that, thankfully, there were a considerable number of funding opportunities available. At present, two funding applications were ongoing (The Urban Tree Challenge Fund and Local Authority Treescapes Fund). Eugene McGee confirmed that all the action points within the draft strategy had been costed, with the majority of these being met internally, however, officers would be looking for as many external funding opportunities as possible. Jessica Bastock explained that the Tree Service was cross-cutting throughout the Council (Planning, Climate Change, Parks) and the actions had been costed and built by the service areas responsible for delivering them.

Clarifying the statistic, 28th greenest borough, Eugene McGee explained this referred to access to green space, so this needed to be reworded when the draft strategy was finalised. With regards to private land, Eugene McGee confirmed that the only influence the Council had was in relation to protecting trees through the planning process or by encouraging the land owner to plant trees and working in partnership with land owners the Council held joint assets with like TfL. In relation to the tiny forests, Jessica Bastock confirmed there were a couple already and officers would be looking within parks and the Council's housing estates for opportunities to develop more. Officers confirmed there was currently one Forest School situated at Wormwood Scrubs and the Council was encouraging more nurseries, schools and after school's clubs to book these spaces.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang commented that a significant proportion of his casework related to trees. Recent topics included: that trees were pruned at the wrong time of the year, for dead trees to be removed and replaced and finally, a group of residents had asked how they could go about getting trees planted in their road. While he commended the planting of more trees, he noted that there was a paucity of dates within the draft strategy and asked if the draft could be strengthened by the inclusion of some key milestone dates. Echoing the previous item, in relation to communication, he asked who the officer contact point was for tree queries. He said while it was important to raise expectations, it was essential any pledges were realistic and deliverable given the current financial climate. And finally, he asked who the Tree Council were.

In response, Eugene McGee confirmed The Tree Council were a committee that had been constituted by Defra. It was formed to provide Local Authorities with guidance on the arboriculture through the tree and woodland toolkit to fulfil a commitment made in the England Trees Action Plan 2021.

Jessica Bastock agreed that the points made about future communications needed to be taken forward. She confirmed there was a key piece of work about communication. So key information, such tree inspections and when works would be undertaken and why, were key messages that needed more prominence.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang asked about the merits of events possibly being held in the north, middle and south of the borough, being held by officers in conjunction with the Tree Council to inform future strategy development. Jessica Bastock explained she was aware that public engagement was an area that Parks colleagues pursued and resident engagement on trees and open spaces and this was something that tree officers could contribute to.

Councillor Jackie Borland commended the ward-by-ward tree surveys which were undertaken and asked if this information could be made available to ward councillors. She reiterated the comments made by Councillor Lang about residents' requests for more trees and asked if there was 'a buy a tree for your road' option and if it was possible to crowd fund along a specific road. It was mooted that perhaps some of the more affluent areas of the borough could buy their own trees which could then free up some budget capacity for trees elsewhere in the borough. Councillor Jackie Borland also highlighted the plight of hay fever and asthma sufferers as a result of (pollen from) plane trees and asked if officers also considered the species and allergens (impact) when trees were due to be planted.

In response, to the contributions for tree planting, Eugene McGee confirmed that one of the key contacts was Trees for Streets which was an organisation that facilitated donations for tree planting. It was noted that the Parks Team already had a well-developed system for making donations and the Highways Team were looking to emulate them. Eugene McGee explained that officers had costed tree donations within the action plan. At present, the Highways Team were looking at expanding the donations system used by the Parks Department.

In relation to allergen levels, Eugene McGee confirmed officers did consider these and were looking to design a species selection matrix to prioritise those species which were most beneficial for biodiversity and did not exacerbate existing allergen levels. In doing so, the aspiration was the right tree would be planted in the right place. However, it was noted that the costs associated with highways planting was higher than for parks.

Councillor Jackie Borland asked how much a tree on a street cost. In response, Jessica Bastock confirmed that to purchase and plant the tree (and in the case of highways to excavate the hole through a civil works contractor) it cost between £800 and £900 per tree. However, there was the caveat that more than one hole might be required if utilities were struck when digging. Officers hoped that by opportunity mapping the borough, there would be a better understanding of where trees could be planted in future.

The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan commented on the key policy driver of extending the canopy cover by 10 percent, from 14 to 16 percent. He asked officers where they envisaged this increased canopy cover would come from given the complexities of planting on the highway. In response, Jessica Bastock confirmed that if possible, trees would be planted in the footway. If not, then officers looked to use the carriageway into the road space (such as a parking bay or where there were road lines). However, using the carriageway was more expensive. In relation to housing estates, officers confirmed it was a case of working with residents to find out where the preferential planting sites were and then to make assessments based on

the complexity of planting the trees. Trees situated by street properties also required monitoring and husbandry to ensure dead trees were removed and live trees were managed and pruned. There were also trees in parks to consider.

Eugene McGee confirmed while the Council had data on trees it owned, it had outsourced data collection to a private company to establish how many private trees there were. Data analysis from aerial photography suggested there were approximately 45,000 trees and so to increase the canopy cover by 2% in a 7-year period, 1125 trees needed to be planted approximately or 160 trees per year. In 2020/21, Eugene McGee confirmed that 120 trees were planted using the Urban Tree Challenge.

In relation to improved communication, the Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan suggested that the Council's website could be updated to include some FAQ's on trees / tree issues. The Chair confirmed that one of the amenity societies had passed on some comments which he asked officers to consider in developing the strategy. The issues they raised included the type of materials used at the base of trees (the need for a permeable surface), the promotion of watering some street trees by local residents and in town centre areas, cages were required around some saplings.

In response, Jessica Bastock confirmed the FAQs were currently being developed. In relation to comments that were sent through, officers agreed that permeable surfaces should be used over tree pits, or left as open soil where possible. In terms of watering, officers confirmed that new trees were watered twice a week and residents were encouraged to help water a tree for the first 2 years of life when it was most vulnerable. And cages were used where appropriate to protect the base of some trees.

At the invitation of the Chair, a resident from the Crabtree Estate asked several questions (in the context of supporting tree planting). These included that the consultation list did not include residents themselves and insurance premiums / cost of living crisis and proximity of trees to properties was significant. He asked if the Council still planned to plant plane tree as street trees. Eugene McGee confirmed that plane trees were still being planted as they were very efficient at absorbing particulate matter and it was a balancing act between allergens and mitigating climate change effects. He explained given the proximity to buildings, a right tree, right place, right person, right time approach was taken.

The resident highlighted the issues created by trees very close to properties and Eugene McGee confirmed that trees within the pollarding scheme were ideally pruned every three years. However, if trees had never been pollarded they would be reduced in accordance with British standards (no more 30% of a tree should be removed at one time).

Jessica Bastock confirmed the draft tree strategy consultation document was due to go out at the end of September / early October but the duration of the consultation had not been finalised. The Chair asked officers for the consultation to be circulated for as long as possible so that residents had a good opportunity to provide their views.

Summing up, the Chair confirmed the committee were interested in increasing the canopy cover, agreed that enhanced communications about trees was required, and the committee wished to look at the final strategy and how this was progressing in due course.

Resolved

1. That the Committee both note and comment on the report.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.30 pm

Chair

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