

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 July 2019 at 7.00 pm

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- Present:** Councillors John Kent (Chair), Allen Mayes (Vice-Chair), Mike Fletcher, Angela Lawrence and Elizabeth Rigby
- Apologies:** Councillor Garry Hague
- In attendance:** Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways  
Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure  
Jahur Ali, Recreation and Leisure Manager  
Phil Carver, Strategic Lead Enforcement and Community Protection  
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager  
Vincent Taylor, Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services  
Lucy Tricker, Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **31. Minutes**

The minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2019 were approved as a correct record.

### **32. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business, but the Chair informed the Committee that Item 7 of the agenda was being brought forward and would be heard first.

### **33. Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared.

### **34. Thurrock Active Parks Programme Update**

The Chair asked Mr. Rob Groves, the Chief Executive of Hardie Park to come to the table and read his statement: *I would like to challenge the decision to forge ahead with the project to employ Parks Engagement Officers at the cost of £300k, (which are S.106 funds) over the next three years. It is my opinion, which is shared by other active citizens, that have been engaged with taking ownership of their local parks and open spaces, that this project is inconsistent with the partnership between the Council and Friends of Hardie Park, which should be one of cooperation with and support of local grassroots*

*led initiatives that model Hardie Park as a mechanism of transforming parks, with little or no public funds. My current experience is that the partnership does not have the full support of Council officers with communications, including emails sometimes taking weeks or months to be replied to, or in some instances are ignored altogether. I feel deeply disappointed and hurt at the way the Council have not engaged residents in this decision and delivery of this project, at the cost of desperately needed funds earmarked for direct investment into communities bearing the brunt of developments.*

The Recreation and Leisure Manager then introduced the report and stated that the Parks Improvement Programme had been envisaged in 2017, as around half of adults in Thurrock were not undertaking physical activity levels in line with the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines, and this was the highest level in Essex. He elaborated that a review had been undertaken in 2016/17 that had reviewed the use of park equipment and found that attendance in parks was low due to anti-social behaviour. He outlined that s.106 funding had been secured for three Park Engagement Officers whose job was to encourage activity, and help prevent anti-social behaviour in parks. The Recreation and Leisure Manager described how there were 72 parks across Thurrock, and more open spaces. He drew the Committee's attention to the Hardie Park Model and how this worked as it was community led. He stated that there were 4-5 other parks across the borough that could use the Hardie Park Model, but a flexible approach was needed, as not all parks were suitable.

The Recreation and Leisure Manager stated that the three Park Engagement Officers had begun work in April 2019 and were all NBG Level 2 qualified, and had so far engaged over 600 people. He mentioned that there were now 15 sessions per week during term-time, which lasted 8-10 weeks with holiday activities organised during school holiday periods. He summarised and stated that the Park Engagement Officers were also there to direct people to funding for their parks, and to help signpost where volunteers could become qualified.

The Chief Executive of Hardie Park queried whether s.106 funding could be used for staff salaries, and how the Park Engagement Officers would generate income. He stated that Hardie Park was 'grass-roots' led, but in the past had also suffered from problems with anti-social behaviour, but had now been voted the Best Park in Essex. He felt that parks needed a community presence and residents needed to take ownership. The Chair agreed and felt that the process for s.106 funding needed to be transparent and should have Member oversight. The Assistant Director – Planning, Transport and Public Protection clarified the process of collection of s.106 funding. He advised Members that the allocation of s.106 monies towards the Active Parks Programme was sound, as the project appeared on the Council's Infrastructure Requirements List and the nature of the project fit the scope of the obligations used. The Assistant Director – Planning, Transport and Public Protection advised Members that Thurrock has previously pooled s.106 contributions, but in 2015 the Government had introduced pooling restrictions upon Local Authorities, and in response to this the Council had started the Infrastructure Requirement List. He explained that the Infrastructure

Requirement List was a live document and communities could nominate projects, with expenditure being monitored by the s.106 Panel. He stated that the s.106 Panel was not a public meeting and was officer-led, with recommendations made being sent to the Director of Place for approval. He mentioned that a report had gone to the Planning, Transport and Regeneration (PTR) Committee in March 2019, which had scrutinised and agreed the process. He then advised Members that at the time of the PTR report in March, £23.5million had been received by the council from s.106 funding with 93% of this having been committed for infrastructure projects.

The Chair asked if the link to the infrastructure requirements list could be sent to committee Members for them to view, and stated that the fact community groups could add to the list needed to be better publicised. He felt that it was an unusual use of s.106 funds, and asked if there were any other recent examples of s.106 funds being used for salaries rather than infrastructure. The Assistant Director – Planning, Transport and Public Protection stated that, whilst not common, it met all of the legal criteria for allocation of s.106 funds, and would find other examples to send to the committee after the meeting.

The Chair questioned how the active parks strategy was sustainable. The Recreation and Leisure Manager replied that over a three year timeline, the Park Engagement Officers would develop and upskill a pool of volunteers who would then be able to run specific sessions. He stated that in year 2 of the project, the team would also look into external funding bids, which would be monitored by Active Thurrock.

Councillor Lawrence began the debate and stated that she felt this was a good project, but asked if local forums could become part of the consultation, as they could help with the recruitment of volunteers. She also asked if Ward Councillors could be made aware when S106 funding was being allocated to a project in their ward. Councillor Fletcher queried how much co-operation was ongoing between the community and the Park Engagement Officers, and requested that the Park Engagement Officers attend the next community forum meeting to clarify their work. The Recreation and Leisure Manager responded that the Park Engagement Officers were currently linking with community hubs, helping to set up 'hub fun days' and engaging them directly with the active parks programme. The Director of Environment and Highways clarified that the s.106 funding which had been used for the active parks strategy had been earmarked for health, and focussed on getting residents active and utilising space. She thanked community groups for their hard work in parks and supported their initiatives, and felt that the new Park Engagement Officers would help to support parks and engage residents. She reiterated that the council would try to find external funding, and would help and support the community to establish park engagement activities. Councillor Mayes asked how many other boroughs were running similar programmes, and whether more park engagement activities were being introduced for Tilbury. The Recreation and Leisure Manager stated that Tower Hamlets Council currently had 9 staff members within their sports and leisure team, helping run similar sessions and helping residents use park equipment, as

well as Barking and Dagenham, Camden and Westminster City Council who also had similar programmes. He added that those examples funded their programmes through their public health teams and were not self-sustaining. He mentioned that the council were currently bidding for Tilbury CLLD to help get residents active, and improve both physical and mental health. He mentioned that the council were also currently trying to seek funding for 15-20 volunteers in South Ockendon.

Councillor Rigby asked if there was a plan to provide open air gym equipment in all parks across the borough. The Recreation and Leisure Manager stated that the team were reviewing outdoor leisure stock as there was lots of demand for this equipment, but it had to be properly maintained and managed. The Chief Executive of Hardie Park stated that he wanted more community engagement in parks, as Hardie Park started with zero volunteers and now had 75, as they were community-led. He felt that parks needed regeneration and capital funding to provide equipment. The Chair then summarised debates and asked for an update report to be presented to committee in October on how the scheme had fared over the summer months.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. The Committee noted the progress of the Active Parks Programme.**
- 2. The Committee requested an additional update report for the next meeting, detailing how the scheme had progressed over summer.**

### **35. Waste Strategy For Thurrock**

The Director of Environment and Highways introduced the report and stated that in December 2018 Central Government issued their waste strategy for England with a focus on re-use, recycling and reducing packaging. She added that the Telegraph recently ran an article stating that “recycling rates have stalled at 45% since 2017”, with an impact assessment by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs accepting the UK will miss its target of 65% waste recycled by 2035. She added that Thurrock’s recycling rates had stagnated in the last few years at 36/37%. The Director of Environment and Highways requested that the Committee agree a sub working group be established to consider opportunities available and produce a vision statement by December 2019, enabling officers to draft a new waste strategy in the first quarter of the calendar year, with consultation and adoption of the strategy to follow. She added that in December 2020 the waste disposal contracts were up for renewal, with an option to extend, and felt it was essential that the new strategy inform future contract procurement.

Councillor Mayes commented that the report stated a new waste strategy would be ready in June 2020, and asked if this would give officers enough time to organise the procurement process. The Director of Environment and

Highways replied that if the vision statement remains similar then it would be possible to organise a procurement process in time for December 2020. She stated that if there was significant change, then the contracts could be extended for up to two years. Councillor Mayes felt that the separation of recycling, as outlined in the report, could be a good strategy, and asked if the team had considered the size of bins. The Director of Environment and Highways stated that this would form part of the review. She referred to the central government strategy, which was seeking increased recycling, stating that over the coming years central government would be undertaking consultation on issues such as free garden waste collection and whether food waste should be separated. Should the working group be approved she suggested that the first meeting be held in Bywaters Recycling Centre so Members could see first-hand where recycling is managed. The Director of Environment and Highways summarised that an annual increase in property number, also put pressure on waste management, as an increase of only 6000 homes meant an additional 3 crews were needed, one for each waste stream.

Councillor Rigby asked if the new system of placing stickers on contaminated bins was having an effect on recycling rates. The Director of Environment and Highways stated that the idea was working well, and added that in-cab facilities were due to go live in July, which would enable crews to input data as to why the bin was contaminated. She explained how in the future this would enable the Contact Centre to provide up to the minute updates in response to residents calling in to report missed collections. She commented that by not only advising the resident that the bin had not been collected due to contamination, that would help educate residents in what could and could not be recycled. Councillor Lawrence asked if new stickers could also be placed on bins. The Director of Environment and Highways explained that a pilot scheme was being undertaken in commercial buildings and flats which would help increase the amount of recycling, and where successful the promotional materials could be rolled out across the borough. Councillor Mayes highlighted point 3.1.4 of the agenda, and asked why other local authorities had increased recycling rates in comparison to Thurrock. The Director of Environment and Highways responded in most cases those local authorities had moved to two-weekly or three-weekly bin collections. She stated that the working group would also be encouraged to visit some best-performing recycling authorities to enable best practice to inform the new waste strategy.

**RESOLVED: That:**

**1. The Committee agreed to a cross-party working group being formed. The purpose of the group to review current Waste arrangements from collection through to disposal and potential commercial operating solutions for Thurrock. The group tasked with producing a vision statement by December 2019, with a new waste strategy/policy to be drafted in the last quarter of the financial year and for agreement and adoption in June 2020.**

**2. The Committee agreed that the working group would be a sub-group of Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a minimum of two members from each political party.**

**36. Tree Planting Strategy - Update Report**

The Strategic Lead – Clean and Green stated that this report was an update on the Tree Planting Strategy. He stated that the Tree Officer was now working with residents and councillors to facilitate tree planting across the borough, and planned to plant 10-12 fruit trees in Elm Road. He stated that the Tree Officer was also working with the transport team to identify areas where trees could be planted. He added that in December 2018, the Committee had agreed the Tree Planting Strategy, which had been agreed by Cabinet in February 2019. He clarified that the Strategy had agreed 66 new trees to be planted in three years at a cost of £9900, and now Members were being consulted when trees were removed in their ward. He added that since the Strategy had been agreed, 32 new trees had been planted, with the remainder to be planted in the autumn, when they had the most chance of survival. He drew Members attention to Appendix 1 that outlined the list of trees that had already been planted, and mentioned that once the location of trees to be planted in Autumn had been agreed, this would be shared with Members. He commented that an arborist apprentice was now employed by the council, and once they had completed their training they had the potential to become a full-time arborist, to fulfil a vacant post, and another arborist apprentice could be recruited. He added that a new water bowser had been purchased to maintain the trees, and a new electronic system for monitoring trees was also being implemented. He summarised that the council rarely removed healthy trees, and were always looking for more funding sources so trees could be purchased.

Councillor Lawrence asked where trees were purchased from, and if Members and residents could request trees for barren land. The Strategic Lead – Clean and Green replied that he believed the council purchased trees locally, and they were currently trying to buy larger trees rather than whips, and stated that the team welcomed suggestions for places to plant trees. The Chair stated that community groups could receive free trees from the Forestry Commission, although they were mostly whips. The Director of Environment and Highways stated that she encouraged local community groups to contact the Forestry Commission, but to liaise with the council's Tree Officer to ensure the right trees get planted in the right places. She added that the council needed to know where new trees were, particularly whips, so the council could protect and maintain them. The Chair asked if the new electronic system would allow Members to find out information on each tree in the borough. The Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure replied that officers would be able to see that level of detail, and could then answer any questions that Members might have.

**RESOLVED: That:**

**1. The report provided the Committee with an update on the Tree Planting Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet on 12 February 2019.**

**37. Environment Enforcement Update**

The Strategic Lead – Enforcement and Community Protection introduced the report and stated that the council now employed four Environmental Enforcement Officers, and one senior Environmental Enforcement Officer. He added that these officers were now undertaking a new accreditation from the Essex Police Commissioner so they had increased devolved powers, as outlined in 2.3.3. He stated that these powers included stopping cycling on the footpath, stopping underage possession of alcohol and tobacco, and stopping idling car engines, and would be well publicised so residents were aware. He stated that new legislation could be enforced through criminal courts, as well as residents receiving a fixed penalty notice. He outlined a recent issue that had been found with the enforcement contractor issuing fixed penalty notices through an automated system, which had recently been reported in the media. He advised that the council was dealing with this through the contract default process.

Councillor Lawrence felt that the new powers were good, particularly surrounding stopping car engines idling as this could help reduce pollution. She asked if the new powers could be used around schools, where pollution could get particularly bad at drop off and pick up times. She asked if an American carpool style lane could be introduced around certain schools. Councillor Mayes supported Councillor Lawrence, and added that the emphasis was on residents to look after their own waste, to ensure it was not being disposed of illegally. Councillor Mayes then asked if income generated from fines remained in the directorate. The Director of Environment and Highways replied that income generated from fixed penalty notices paid for enforcement officers, and other enforcement activity, ensuring the service remained cost neutral. She added that any surpluses generated were used for enforcement activity, such as court proceedings.

**RESOLVED: That:**

**1. The Committee noted the performance and service achievements and supported the future priorities for Environmental Enforcement, which is linked to the Council's priorities.**

**2. The Committee supported the adoption of S34 – Duty of Care for domestic waste as stated in point 3.4 of this report, and recommend to Cabinet for approval.**

**3. The Committee supported the adoption of S42 – Idling engines in parked vehicles as stated in point 3.5 of this report, and recommend to Cabinet for approval.**

**38. Community Safety Partnership Report on Prevent**

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager opened the report and stated that it was a statutory duty for local authorities to have due regard to Prevent and link it to the wider duty of safeguarding children and adults. She explained that the terrorism level had been at severe since 2014, which was the second highest level, and had only escalated in 2017 directly after the Westminster attacks. She described how the terrorism threat in Thurrock was no greater than anywhere else in the region, and a profile was received quarterly which outlined specific threats, but this was not available to the public. She discussed the greatest threats to Thurrock, and how the Prevent meeting looked at various strategies and action plans to target this. She stated that Prevent was an Officer group led by the Assistant Director Housing, and that they had recently completed the Home Office Prevent toolkit. In addition, she spoke about the Member working group and encouraged attendance. She added that there was also a new escalation route for the Channel Panel as they now met monthly, rather than when a case was referred. She stated that this process would be reviewed in October.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. The Committee noted the national risk.**
- 2. The Committee noted the ratings and actions against the benchmark in the *Prevent* duty toolkit for Local Authorities.**
- 3. The Committee supported the Local Authority to fulfil its obligations through encouraging members to attend the Member working group on *Prevent*.**
- 4. The Committee agreed to complete the online training at [www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk) .**
- 5. The Committee agreed to promote the important role that members play in community tension monitoring and reports.**

**39. Work Programme**

The Director of Environment and Highways stated that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to focus on the missed Key Performance Indicator (KPI) regarding bin collection. She stated that since October 2018 this KPI had met target, barring March due to climate issues but this had only been missed by 0.03%. She stated that to meet Corporate Overview and Scrutiny's request a verbal update would be provided on a quarterly basis to keep Members aware. The Chair and Members agreed to these updates.

**The meeting finished at 8.29 pm**



Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**