

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Awale Olad (Chair), Camron Aref-Adib, Nina De Ayala Parker, Sharon Hardwick, Matthew Kirk, Izzy Lenga and Rishi Madlani

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillors Stephen Stark

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Danny Beales (Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment)

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

THAT the guidance on hybrid meetings be agreed.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Stark.

Apologies for lateness was received from Councillor Matthew Kirk.

3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

Broadcast of the meeting

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available upon request. Those who were seated in the Chamber or participating via Teams were deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

The Chair thanked Councillor Camron Aref-Adib for chairing the last Culture and Environment Scrutiny meeting in his absence.

5. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were none.

6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There were none.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEW HOMES, JOBS AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities, Culture and an Inclusive Economy.

Responding to questions Councillor Danny Beales (Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment) made the following comments:

- The Black Cap had been designated as an asset of community value, which gave the site greater protection from redevelopment. A significant limitation for the owner should they want to dispose of the premises was a right to bid rather than a right to buy. The ownership of the Black Cap had changed, the Council was working with the Forum to find an operator to take over the site.
- Section 106 income was collected for specific things such as transport. Spending on Transport and how the income was allocated was dictated by transport colleagues.

- With regard to the phone boxes, they had not kept pace with modern technology, were poorly maintained and were having negative consequences in areas including being used for anti-social behaviour. The Council served breach of condition notices on phone operators requiring removal of those phone boxes that were in a state of disrepair.
- With regards to youth employment, Camden had a number of different programmes including the Kickstart programme which had provided 210 kickstart roles secured for young people working with over 60 employers. There was also the Camden Apprenticeship scheme which supported local employers and managers in the Council to create apprenticeship vacancies Camden.
- In terms of opening up the apprenticeship scheme to all ages in the borough, despite the many positives of the scheme, there were significant limitations such as the amount paid to apprentices compared to a full-time job, the perception of apprenticeship amongst employers and applicants and the range of professions where apprenticeships existed.
- The Council was committed to paying the London living wage for its own apprenticeships, also encouraging partners to pay the London living wage.
- The Council had also done a lot of work in trying to demystify apprenticeships by organising job fairs, workshops and encouraging employers from a range of different sectors to take on apprentices. The Council had also done some work around older workers and adult community learning. However, broader reforms around apprenticeships were required.
- With regards to further supporting refugees in the borough into work, the launch of Camden Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEAM) programme aimed to engage young people from underrepresented backgrounds in STEAM and support a diverse talent pipeline, it also aimed to provide pathways and opportunities for young people to enter and succeed in STEAM careers.
- In terms of employment opportunities these were positive initiatives for refugees, however there were also challenges including uncertainty about how long refugee families would reside in the borough and whether they would be entitled to work in the U.K.
- There had also been a lack of long-term funding from central government for housing, the Council had been lobbying nationally for a permanent funding agreement. The issue of funding was a challenge and the Council was looking at other options such as refurbishing homes.
- With regards to whether the plans around the Holmes Road Depot included demolition, the Council had not required the demolition of anything as part of the potential agreement, what had been made clear to the developers was the borough expected continued provision of waste recycling facilities, 50% of housing to be generally affordable as well as broader benefits in terms of jobs and financial receipts for the borough. The proposals for the site would be required to be in line with Council planning policies. The Council had looked at the available options and noted that it might be possible to reuse elements or specific parts of existing buildings but more work was required as the proposals were brought forward There would always be change but this would

be done in a way which respected Council policies which delivered the best viable option for the borough.

- The O2 Centre planning application would be going to the Planning Committee for decision. The Council had been in a three-way discussion with the applicant and TfL to continue to press for comprehensive redevelopment of the site to meet strategic objectives set out in national, regional and local policy.
- The Council had met and considered the views of Community Groups around the legislation relating to TPO's which was considered to be outdated. TPO's could not be applied to Trees that were not visible from public view. The Council was using existing powers, had written to the government and continued to lobby government to change the legislation around TPO's. The Council had not yet received a response.
- The recent news from the government about further delays to HS2 was deeply worrying and frustrating for residents. The delay was more likely to cost more money rather than reduce costs. As more time was being taken it was hoped that the government would get all aspects of the situation right.
- At the moment the Council did not know what would happen to the network rail station. There was a plan for an integrated station with an integrated design. There was also consideration being given to the refurbished option, this would however need to be signed off by the treasury.
- The Council would continue to push with the GLA and speak with one voice on HS2 and Euston Station issues to put pressure on the government.
- With regards to the interim situation with cycle routes, there was work going on with the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden and TfL to consider options for temporary green space around Euston Station. It was not possible to have long term arrangements because of the temporary nature of the situation.
- There was the expectation that in the long-term green space would be returned to Euston Garden and long-term voids would be brought back into use.
- With regard to the Planning Inspectorates delays in deciding enforcement cases, there was a backlog, the Council was keen for these cases to be resolved by the Governments Planning Inspectorate.
- In relation to the Council's Community Investment Programme (CIP) and the net additional homes, the Council provided a yearly annual report a link to the report could be circulated to members.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for attending the meeting and his comprehensive response to questions.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment be noted.

8. PROMOTING GREEN SPACE AND BIODIVERSITY IN CAMDEN

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity in Camden, which was introduced by Councillor Nina de Ayala Parker, Cabinet Adviser on Promoting Green Space and Biodiversity.

The Cabinet Adviser informed the Committee that the report's main focus was how to increase biodiversity and how this linked with green spaces in Camden. She highlighted that there was a lot the Council was doing, which was good, however the Council needed to do more.

Members made the following comments:

- It was an excellent report and fully endorsed all the recommendations, noting that it was the first time the two key issues had been combined together in one report.
- There were lots of good things in the report. The guardians such as Neighbourhood Associations like the Belsize Society did a lot of good work and it would be nice if a lot more recognition could be given to these associations.
- It was good to see hedgehogs being championed. There was particularly good work occurring around the top of West Hampstead and there was a pressing need to connect that community to the Hampstead Heath community. It would be ideal if TfL could provide a tunnel.

The Cabinet Adviser along with Richard Bradbury, Director of Environment and Sustainability and Oliver Jones Director of Recreation, gave the following key responses to questions:

- In terms of the gaps in Camden's delivery of service, there were gaps in communicating to residents and the community on what the Council was already doing. It was difficult to find the information unless you knew where to look. For example, to start a Community Garden or a community related project in an estate.
- There was the need for a clearer streamlined process to make it easier for residents to complain or discuss environmental issues.
- A recommendation was to have a Community Green Deal which would place residents at the centre of the offer and link up community groups enabling them to talk to each other.
- The Climate movement itself could be an exciting and passionate place to be and when change occurred it was satisfying. There were a lot of positives around what could be done.
- Many activists had highlighted the need to prevent greenwashing. A way of doing this was to make sure the discussion included all communities in

Camden. This could shine a light on inequalities. This could involve actively communicating with residents, engaging state schools and local football clubs.

- Empowering residents to know that people could make a difference. The local authority was in a strong position to reach out and make sure everybody was aware that they could make a difference.
- Greenwashing was a massive issue. There was a need to do more to show residents that they could make a difference. This would be especially effective when suggestions and solutions they proposed were put into effect.
- One of the recommendations proposed was to have a complaints process around climate action which would go directly to the Environment team. Responding to residents' complaints would make a difference. The Community Green Deal was another suggestion, this would involve simplifying things for residents and make it easier for residents to get things done.
- With regards to pesticides, the Council had tested hot foam and other methods as well as not using pesticides in a particular area. The Council had then been urged to use pesticides again in areas where weeds were getting out of hand. The EU was considering this issue and whether it should be relicensed going forward. The Council was monitoring, this included a recent review by Cardiff Council and Cardiff University whether this was the right approach. There were a lot of governance stages to be completed before a decision would be taken with the peer review of evidence expected to be published in July. It was likely that a session on this could be facilitated in the autumn.
- With regards to hedgehogs, they were a powerful case study and the recommendation was that the Council employ a Biodiversity Engagement Officer who could also raise awareness of other species.
- Some residents had suggested that the term guardians of the land be used which empowered residents to feel more connected.
- With regards to keeping Hampstead Cemetery open later so residents could use the green space, the cemetery was operated by Islington Council as part of a shared management agreement for active cemetery sites. Although Camden does not have direct control over the space it was a member of the board, it could influence opening hours and use of the space. The Board would be meeting soon to talk about management of the site, this issue would be raised with Islington and Camden Cemetery Service.

ACTION BY: Director of Recreation

- Camden was working closer with Thames Water to improve flood resilience in the borough.

- Ideas were being looked at how the knowledge of young people and schools could be tapped into to address climate issues. There were suggestions of creating communication channels between schools, this could have an international climate action outlook with a local approach. There would be a shared goal to address the climate crisis.
- With regards to retrofitting the Council had been successful over the last few years in getting funding from the government to retrofit Swiss Cottage library £4.2m and the schools programme £6m. There was also place based retrofitting work going on in Somers Town. The council was also working on a large-scale retrofitting model with other London Boroughs.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted and that the recommendations as set out in the report be endorsed by the committee.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Supporting Communities.

Members were informed of the request by the Circular Economy Panel to extend the time limit for submitting its final report to the Committee noting that more time was needed to engage with the community. Members agreed to the request.

Members suggested that items relating to

- Culture and Leisure
- The Night-time economy and
- Arts Council Cuts

Should be included on the work programme for future Committee meetings.

Resolved:

That

- the report be noted; and
- Agreed to extend the time limit for submitting the Circular Economy Panel final report to September 2023.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 8.33 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END