

Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission (Decommissioned 5 October 2023)

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission (Decommissioned 5 October 2023) held on Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Reginald Popoola
Councillor David Watson
Councillor Leo Pollak
Councillor Youcef Hassaine

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets

OFFICER SUPPORT: Dale Foden, Head of Service - Highways, Environment and Leisure
John Wade, Head of Traded Services (Acting), Environment and Leisure
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager, scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Cassandra Brown.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair took this opportunity to welcome two proposed co-opted members joining the Commission this evening, and for the rest of the administrative year (subject to formal confirmation by both the chair and vice chair of OSC).

The following proposed co-optees have been nominated by Southwark Nature Action Volunteers. A summary of their experience was outlined:

- Anna Colligan is a landscape architect experienced in ecological restoration, sustainable building and development, and de-paving for biodiversity. She has worked on local schemes, including landscape designs for Trees for Bermondsey, Friends of Burgess Park, and Southwark Housing/Flood Risk Management
- Simon Saville has a good knowledge of biodiversity, and is familiar with Southwark green spaces. He carries out regular surveys of the butterflies in Burgess Park, and monitors the biodiversity of other south London green spaces. He is familiar with Southwark's Nature Action Plan, the London Environment Strategy (2017) and the practicalities of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the Urban Greening Factor (UGF). He is well connected with Biodiversity Officers in South London, and with London Wildlife Trust (LWT), Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL, the biological records centre for the GLA area – he is on their Advisory Panel). He volunteers and is a trustee of the national charity, Butterfly Conservation, and also a trustee of the London Beekeepers Association and Wild Clapham (just starting up). He encourages people to explore, enjoy - and improve - the green spaces near where they live.

The chair explained that the co-optees have been invited to contribute their expertise to the Biodiversity review, in particular, but will be welcome to contribute to all areas of the Commission's work. They will be non-voting.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record

5. REVIEW: BIODIVERSITY - LAMBETH COMMUNITY WEEDING

The chair introduced Jason Prentis, Environmental Outreach Project Manager, Lambeth Council, and explained he had been invited explain the borough's Community Weeding Scheme and Lambeth Council's work to go herbicide and pesticide free. The Community Weeding Volunteers' Manual is enclosed.

The chair invited him to present.

Lambeth in 2019 had a three a year contract to spay pavements with Glyphosate - like most councils. The council was approached by Incredible Edible to end

spraying and find alternatives to control weeds; however, Lambeth was in a contract, which would be expensive to exit so as a compromise the council agreed that streets and communities could opt out if residents would be prepared to do weeding. The council promoted this and were pleasantly surprised that 30 streets joined. Then during the pandemic, the council increased this to a 100 streets as people really enjoyed the neighbourhood aspects. After a further push the council reached 130 streets.

Following the success of this the council stopped spraying and now streets can opt in to the Community Weeding Scheme and leave the wild plants to grow throughout the spring and summer. Residents remove the species that can harm pavements (e.g Buddleia and Tree of Heaven) or be trip hazards . The scheme has been a big success and a botanist recently counted over 70 species including rare and endangered plants.

The chair invited questions and the following points were made:

- The council do intend to continue to promote the Community Weeding Scheme through publications and social media.
- Members commented that they liked the scheme and the associated community benefit.
- The Lambeth officer said one of the challenges was finding a contractor to manually weed the streets not community weeded.
- Lambeth is launching a kerb side strategy which is seeking to reclaim part of the paved area for cycle hangers and parklets.
- Members asked to what extent officers and residents have resisted or welcomed the scheme and how did you get people on-board. The officer said that people working for the council have been open to the change. He said that he had been on a journey from expecting tidy and clean - to valuing plants and diversity
- The officer went on to say that there have been fewer complaints from residents than expected. There are 700 neighbourhood champions who give feedback on fly tipping etc. but very little on this, other than helping more people to get involved.
- The officer was asked if the contact was more expensive as a member said that he understands that manual weeding is labour intensive. The officer said he has not been part of the tendering process; however, he offered to find out more.
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RESOLVED

More information will be provided comparing the cost of manual weeding with spraying.

6. REVIEW: BIODIVERSITY - PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK PAN UK

Nick Mole joined the commission remotely and presented the work of the Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) PAN

He explained the reasons for ending spraying with glyphosate:

- Impact on human health with precautionary as there is evidence that people working with glyphosate are more at risk of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma,
- Improves biodiversity for plants,
- Improves insects as they feed in plants,
- Runoff gets into water supply, which has to be cleaned,
- There is wide public support,
- There is an expected EU ban on herbicides and pesticides in public spaces.

The chair invited questions and the following points were made:

In response to a question on contracting cost Nick Mole said that over time there are savings after a possible spike in costs with the purchase of new machinery . Usually that are long term savings with less spraying and cutting This can certainly be cost neutral or cost negative.

Council officers are often keen to implement as they want to reduce exposure to hazardous chemicals . In terms of residents most people are in favour but people often do not feed back positively. The public interest and mood has changed in favour of reducing herbicide use and promoting biodiversity.

7. AIR QUALITY PARTICULATES: IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY

8. AIR QUALITY PARTICULATES: SUSTAINABLE TYRES

Sam Cooper, Head of Operations, from ENSO Ltd presented on work to produce sustainable tyres, designed to reduce particulates.

He made the following points

- ENSO make better tyres for Electrical Vehicles (EV).
- EVs are very heavy, and use a highly level of torque. This means that tyres wear is higher, by 20 – 50% leading to potentially 2 to 3 billion extra tyres from EV per year.
- There is a problem with both production and disposal of tyres . It is a carbon intensive industry with some nasty chemicals used in production.
- Each tyre produces PM 2.5 and PM 10 plus road dust.
- It is estimated that 25% micro plastic in sea are from tyres .
- The solution to this problems include driving less and making tyres more durable , from better material that can be recycled.
- ENSOs trials comparing tyre and with budget manufacturers show a reduction of 35% in tyre wear . This work was done with London Freight Lab.
- ENSO would recommend a greater body of evidence is gathered, and noted that while pollution is huge issue it can be mitigated
- There is not a lot of regulatory pressure to improve performance. Pay per mile is being considered . In California regulations are most well specified.
- Emissions are from tailpipe, brakes and tyres.
- ULEZ 4 & 5 are focused on tailpipe emissions, while ULEZ 7 (due 2027) introduces particulate emissions set at a low-bar .
- Brakes will improve in as regenerative in EV .
- Improvements to driving skills is one the most effective measures to reduce particulates.
- The quality of the road surface also impacts on degradation.

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

- ENSO are working with electric taxis and delivery companies.
- ENSO tyres are made in Algeria. They use higher amount of recycled

material and incorporate more natural rubber .

- There is not trade off between durability and grip as with higher science these can both be increased
- The council could reduce particulates in its own fleet by focusing on driver behaviour by investing in training, and using higher performance tyres.

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The London Freight Lab report will be provided.

9. STREETS FOR PEOPLE

Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets, will presented with officer support from Dale Foden, Head of Service - Highways, Environment and Leisure, and John Wade, Head of Traded Services (Acting), Environment and Leisure.

The chair invited questions and the following points were made:

- The 10 % target to reduce cars is based on trends.
- Residents generally support the council acting on the Climate Emergency, however targeted engagement is often required to generate support for the operational measures that support the outcome of reducing carbon and improving air quality , such as the CPZ. Engagement by representative community leaders is often most effective.
- Electric bikes and scooters are supported. E scooters come under a London wide agreement, whereas bike agreements are arranged by individual borough. Southwark has an agreement with Lime and Human Forest. There are enforcement levers to prevent poor parking. The council want parking on road rather than pavement, and are looking at how to develop the same rules with different boroughs so the public can understand easily where to park. There is a problem with bypassing hiring which prevents enforcement.
- The council is consulting on how people want to their streets to look like, and decided to invite people to tell the council what they want as although there are constrained resources the council can use opportunities to utilise funding and act quickly if it is clear what people want.
- Officers are building a borough and ward maps by analysing data. There are layers – e.g cycling, walking, public transport.
- Herbicide has now been cut back to only using one spray so there are now more streets plants, but this seems to be supported by residents.

- Residents are waiting longer than 6 months for bike hangers, however over time the target is achievable, but presently the waiting list is 7800, so cycle parking provision requires a massive expansion . Officers are looking at other ways such as bike sheds on housing estates.

10. SOUTHWARK LAND COMMISSION

Councillor McAsh, vice chair of the Southwark Land Commission, presented the recent report circulated in the main agenda , which went to the 12 September cabinet.

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

- Members asked if the council ought to classify more green space as Metropolitan Open Land, and better links made to biodiversity/ carbon sequestration.
- The cabinet member said that food production was in the original brief however much of the community seemed a bit perplexed by this and it was not high up the agenda of commissioners.
- Members said that they looked forward to the Cabinet response and how social purpose and the trade off with revenue rising can be balanced.
- The cabinet member was congratulated on the report and bringing various stakeholders together

RESOLVED

A follow up report back will be provided in the New Year.

11. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REVIEW: FINANCING SOUTHWARK'S GREEN TRANSITION

The report was noted.

12. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REVIEW: RESIDENT PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

The report was noted.

13. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.