

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor David Watson
Anna Colligan
Simon Saville

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

OFFICER SUPPORT: Michael McNicholas, Head of Waste and Cleaning, Environment.
Tara Quinn, Head of Parks
Julian Fowgies, Parks, Trees & Ecology Manager presented.
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager , Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Graham Neale, Youcef Hassaine and Leo Pollak.

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

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

It was noted that Penny Frith is now more commonly known as Penny Metal, and the minutes will be amended . The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

5. TOPIC: WASTE, RECYCLING, REDUCING FLY-TIPPING AND STREET CLEANING : USING RESOURCES BETTER

Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets presented, with support from Michael McNicholas, Head of Waste and Cleaning, Environment.

Members then asked questions and the following points were made:

- There is a permanent presence of waste cleaners in Town Centres.
- Residential roads have a full sweep of detritus every 5 weeks, with litter picking every 2 to 6 weeks.
- Graffiti removal can take time as the shop owners are not necessarily the same as shop operators, and their permission is required. In addition, they may not mind, if for example the graffiti is on shutters which are closed when the shop is not operated. There are seven teams with an approximate spend of £450,000 annually.
- Positive behaviour change is encouraged through a combination of enforcement with commercial business and also practices such as placing bins in places with community oversight on housing estates.
- Garden and kitchen waste will be collected by the council separately from October, with food waste going to an anaerobic plant. The government has mandated anaerobic collection by 2026. The council will be working with housing in estates to collect food waste, then working with other housing providers such as Registered Social Landlords. Members were advised that some homes are harder to provide food waste collection facilities, such as flats above shops with limited storage.
- Rubbish collection is linked to biodiversity as the wrong type of rubbish attracts the wrong type of wildlife. Good landscape design can mitigate or prevent this.

- The Head of Waste and Cleaning said that 95% of fly tipping is removed in 24hours. A member queried performance based on anecdotal feedback from constituents and noted that the council is the 7th worst performer on fly tipping in London. The officer said that while the council is not the best our reporting is more granular than many boroughs.
- Enforcement of fly tipping offences is not straightforward as CCTV evidence can be complex. There is preference for behaviour change, but the council is looking at all options.
- The removal and cleaning agents are citrus based, and the least toxic.
- There is a program of work to repair broken rubbish shoots in housing estates, with seven estates prioritised to to fix these over the coming months, rather than year.
- Community skips have not been done since 2015. They are well liked by residents, however they can be open to abuse.

RESOLVED

Officers will provide further information on:

- The ingredients of cleaning and graffiti removal products,
- More detail on the rubbish shot repair programme on housing estates.

6. WASTE IN PARKS

Tara Quinn, Head of Parks, and Julian Fowgies, Parks, Trees & Ecology Manager presented.

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

- There are park liaison officers who talk to people in parks to address problems such as litter and also loud music . Most people are amenable; however this is not always the case and the service has been working with community leaders to encourage better communication. The service is also

encouraging better social norms, by using social media, for example .

- Members suggested signs saying 'please bring your litter home' . Officer said they are looking at communications, and the work of other boroughs. They said there is a risk of littering the park with signs. The campaign by Glastonbury Festival to 'leave no trace' was suggested by commission members.
- Officers said they will be looking at prevention measures over the summer . The service is proud of the 30 green flags (which include litter provision) and the council's work with park amenity groups such as 'friends of'.
- Waste collection is subject to re-contracting and as part of the Gateway zero process officers will be doing some soft market testing as well as giving consideration of bringing in-house.
- There was a discussion on large bins with out lids to deal with heavy demand and concern from constituents and 'friends of' groups that open bins enable foxes to feed. Officers were asked it is would it be better to provide more Euro bins and they said this is under consideration and would require capital investment. There are bins that send back information on how full that that could aid collection

7. GROWING CITIES

The chair welcomed Leanne Werner, author of Growing Cities, a report looking at urban agriculture in North America. Leanne is a former Southwark Councillor (and past chair of the Environment Scrutiny Commission). She is also founder director of Wilder, a social enterprise based in London, working to create more spaces for wildlife.

Leanne Werner gave a summary of her report and then the commission were invited to ask questions, and the following points were made:

- Leanne recommended that the council develops an urban agriculture policy.
- Roof tops offer an opportunity to expand growing spaces for food. The Old Kent Road Opportunity Area could be a test.

- Rainwater harvesting is important for food growing. A co-opted member advised that existing rainwater requirements since 2015 mean that developments are already conditioned to save storm water, so it is a relatively easy to pivot to providing this for urban agriculture.
- Agroponic farms were visited by Leanne, however her focus was on food growing projects that delivered biodiversity gains.
- A co-opted members advised that living roofs in cities can be expensive so need political will and incentives. Leanne said this is there in North America
- There is link with green jobs and a huge investment in skills in Detroit. An urban agriculture course or college would be very beneficial as there are not yet sufficient skills in the city.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE FREIGHT

RESOLVED

The Commission agreed the scrutiny review report.

9. SCRUTINY REVIEW ON BIODIVERSITY

The scrutiny review on Biodiversity will be rolled over for completion in the next administrative year.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.