

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21ST MARCH 2022.

PRESENT-Councillor Khonat, in the chair, Councillors Humphrys, Khan, Z., Oates, McFall, Sidat, Taylor and Casey.

Also present- Martin Eden, Director of Place.

Paul Conlon, Democratic Services.

1. Welcome and Apologies.

The chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2021.

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2021.

Resolved- That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

3. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. Trees in the Borough.

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Place outlining the issues the borough faced relating to trees. The Committee were looking at the issue as a scrutiny topic for a number of reasons including ash die back, the recent storms, planting initiatives and public concerns. The Council is responsible for the care, development and maintenance of tens of thousands of trees owned by the Council, which are located in Council parks, open spaces and on the highway. As a Council we are committed to maintaining the health and longevity of all Council trees through appropriate management including:

- Appropriate works will be undertaken on dead or unhealthy trees.
- Tree works is undertaken by fully qualified arborists, in line with management surveys and plans.

The Council did not generally undertake works to otherwise healthy and well-formed trees for reasons of:

- Size
- Leaf, seed, twig or flower litter
- Shade or blocked views
- Interference with transmitted signals, e.g. television, satellite channel access
- Honeydew exudation

- Reduced security by virtue of concealment
- Alleged root damage to property.

The Committee noted that the Council does not have a responsibility for tree on private land or un-adopted land.

The Committee examined the issue of Ash dieback and the effects that this would have on trees in the borough and across the country. Ash trees were the third most common tree in Britain, they were present in woodlands, hedgerows and parks and gardens across the country and have a cultural significance in our urban and rural landscapes. They are also a valuable habitats for over 1,000 species of wildlife. It is estimated that there are more than 60 million ash trees outside woodlands in the UK and that the majority will become affected with ash dieback in years to come. Members were informed of the main issues for the council arising from die back and the work that was to be done on an ash die back plan which required the council to identify the number and condition of ash trees on Council owned land and or near the highway. Members were informed that public safety was the priority for assessing what action to be taken.

The Committee looked at the process for reporting issues with trees and residents responsibilities and the management issues with council owned trees. The Committee were also informed of the recent decision at the Finance Council to increase resources to deal with tree related issues.

Members looked at the targets for tree planting in the borough to help mitigate climate change and how the planting of trees was progressing. The Committee supported the work of to involve community groups and schools in this. Members requested that the planting of value added trees such as fruit trees be investigated which could enhance community areas. The Committee also suggested that schools involvement be sought in helping compile the tree audit as this could be a learning activity.

Resolved-

1. That the work of the Department on Trees and the issues they raise be commended.
2. That the Director of Place investigate ways in which the schools in the borough could help in creating the inventory of trees required as part of their curriculum.
3. That the planting of extra value trees such as fruit and nut trees be looked at together with the possibilities of involving community groups.

5. Waste and Recycling

The Committee were updated on the progress of the waste and recycling collection. 98 tonnes more recycling had been achieved in the year to December and this represented real progress. Blue bin collection of waste card and paper had also increased with very little spoiled content which generated greater income to the council. Grey Bin collection content had also improved with contamination down from 36% to 24%, a significant improvement. Members were informed of the proposal to engage an additional education officer in order to boost collection further.

Resolved- 1. That the report be noted

2. That the Committee continue to monitor the collection and recycling rates in the new municipal year.

6. Cemeteries and Burials

The Committee were updated on the progress in identifying and establishing new cemeteries in the borough. Tests were ongoing at two sites and the outcome would be reported to the Committee

Resolved- That the issue continue to be monitored during the next municipal year.

Chair at the meeting where the minutes were signed.....

Date.....