

Minutes

PETITION HEARING - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES

7 November 2012



Meeting held at Committee Room 3a - Civic
Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Jonathan Bianco</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: John Purcell (in part), Stuart Hunt (in part), Alan Tilly (in part) Mike Paterson (in part) and Steven Maiden</p> <p>Also Present: Councillors John Hensley (3 & 4), Anita MacDonald (5 & 6) and Dominic Gilham (6)*</p> <p><i>*numbers in brackets are the agenda item numbers that these Councillors were present for.</i></p>	
3.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC. (Agenda Item 1)</p> <p>It was confirmed that the meeting would take place in public.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
4.	<p>TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE OFFICERS ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS RECEIVED. (Agenda Item 2)</p>	<p>Action by</p>
5.	<p>UXBRIDGE GOLF COURSE, THE DRIVE, ICKENHAM (Agenda Item 3)</p> <p>Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by the lead petitioner included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mr Steven Browne spoke on behalf of the petition submitted to the Council. He was the President of the Harefield Place Golf Club which played and competed at Uxbridge Golf Course.▪ The petitioners from the Golf Club had the support of the Ickenham Residents' Association.▪ That the aim of the petitioners was to get Uxbridge Gold Course –previously described as a good and challenging course – reinstated to its full 18 holes.▪ The 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th holes had been affected by National Grid construction works and were core holes for the course. Although the 11th hole had not been included in the report as being affected, the hole was out of use because it had not been maintained following construction work.▪ Contrary to the officer report set out in the agenda, it was suggested that the Council had been party to the legal agreement between Mack Trading and the National Grid.▪ Mr Browne asserted that, the Council did not push for reinstatement as it should have which had led to the holes in	<p>Action by</p> <p>Mike Paterson</p>

question being left unplayable. Had the Council not intervened with Mack Trading when it had, the course would now have been fully reinstated.

- 6 clubs had contacted Harefield Place Golf Club to inform them that they would not be playing matches at the course due to there not being 18 holes.
- A lot of private players would return to playing at the course if the holes in question were reinstated.
- It was suggested that, with as little as an extra 5 players a day at the course, the £200,000 cost of reinstating the holes in question would be paid back very rapidly. It was further suggested that the current £12 a day cost of playing at the golf course could be pushed up to £22 a day if the reinstatement work was done.
- Petitioners were unhappy with the Council's speed at progressing the reinstatement work and asked that a clear timetable be set out for the future.

Further concerns, comments and suggestions raised by petitioners present at the meeting included the following:

- Previous promises had been made by the Council regarding the golf course but these had not been kept.
- The possibility of using the surveys of Uxbridge Golf Course undertaken by Mack Trading should be explored as a way to reduce the cost of the works.
- If an outside agency was used to maintain or develop the course again, better background checks should be done to ensure that similar problems did not occur again.
- The number of people using the course and membership of the Harefield Place Golf Club had fallen due to the amount of unplayable holes.
- Questions were asked around whether there was a report on the golf course which was currently underway and whether this could be shared with Harefield Place Golf Club and the Ickenham Residents' Association when it was completed.

Councillor John Hensely, an Ickenham Ward Councillor, advised that the Council was currently operating in a difficult economic climate. The Council had made £40 million savings so far and was required to make a further £61 million of savings. The cost of reinstating the holes in question had to be understood within this context. He noted that the Council had to be extremely careful with plans for the course to ensure that further damage was not caused to the course. He suggested that the way forward was to develop a clear timetable for the works to be delivered.

Councillor Jonathan Bianco listened to the concerns of the petitioners and responded to the points raised:

- The Council had not had a good relationship with Mack Trading since the company began to use areas of Uxbridge Golf Course as a landfill site. This was a money-making scheme for Mack Trading which had been undertaken without the Council's consent. This situation had led to the Council reassuming the management of Uxbridge Golf Course.

- Since the dispute between the Council and Mack Trading, the company had gone bankrupt and it would not be possible to reclaim the £250,000 that the company owed to the Council.
- It was acknowledged that the Council could have been quicker in dealing with the issue of reinstating the holes in question.
- There was a range of options open to the Council for the use of the golf course. These included converting the course into a country park. Although these options were not likely to be taken up, it was noted that there were a range of residents' opinions that needed to be acknowledged.
- It would not be possible to make a decision on the final plans for the course at this meeting but officers would be asked to review the situation and report their findings back to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services.
- Any reinstatement works would be put out to a robust tendering process which would ensure that the most appropriate company was selected to do the work. It was noted that the Council's procurement processes had been significantly improved in recent years.
- Officers would be asked to check on the progress of the report on the golf course currently being undertaken. The president of Harefield Place Golf Club and The Ickenham Residents' Association would be provided with an update on the report in due course.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met the petitioners and considered their requirements for the reinstatement of Uxbridge Golf Course**
- 2. Instructed officers to conduct a review of the situation with the reinstatement of holes on Uxbridge Golf Course and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services.**
- 3. Instructed officers to check on the progress of the report on Uxbridge Golf Course and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services for circulation to petitioners and the Ickenham Residents' Association.**

Reasons for recommendation

Allowed the Cabinet Member to consider the petition with the petitioners.

Alternative options considered

These were identified from the discussions with the petitioners.

6.	BURNHAM AVENUE, ICKENHAM - PETITION AGAINST THE PROPOSED PLANNED REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF HIGHWAY TREES (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)	Action by
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Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by petitioners included the following:

Steve Palmer

- Mr Paul Muir spoke on behalf of the petition submitted to the Council. Mr Muir was an Arboricultural Consultant in Bristol.
- The Mature Hornbeam Trees on Burnham Avenue were estimated to be 40-50 years old with roughly 30-40 years of life left.
- There was damage being caused by tree roots to the public footpath, kerb stones and private garden walls.
- Residents recognised that there were significant costs associated with the works to be undertaken on the trees.
- The Council must recognise that the proposals to replace the Hornbeam trees on Burnham Avenue with a different species would not be a like-for-like replacement and would change the character of the street.
- The Council was too focussed on the costs of the trees and was not sufficiently considering their benefits. According to the London Tree Officers Association's method of valuing trees, the 37 Hornbeams on Burnham Avenue would have a notional value of roughly £500,000.
- It was acknowledged that some of the more seriously damaged trees may have to be removed but that there was ways of repairing root damage which would mean removal was not necessary for many trees. This type of management of the trees may require a periodic budget but this should be understood beside the costs of other options to deal with the issue.
- The removal of these trees should also be understood in the wider context of the threat to urban trees in Britain. The current issue with Ash Dieback disease and other diseases facing many British tree species should encourage the Council to reassess its management plan for these trees.

Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by residents of Burnham Avenue present at the meeting included the following:

- Not all residents had been given the opportunity to sign, or refuse to sign the petition.
- The trees in question had caused significant damage to the street and, in one case, to property drains.
- The removal of 37 trees when only a small number of trees were causing problems was excessive.

Councillor John Hensely, an Ickenham Ward Councillor, advised that he had only ever had one complaint as a Ward Councillor concerning the loss of light caused by the trees on the street. He suggested that the best way to resolve the issue with the trees was to conduct another survey, remove the worst affected trees and reduce crowns where necessary.

Councillor Jonathan Bianco listened to the concerns of the petitioners and responded to the points raised:

- The Hornbeam trees on Burnham Avenue were not an appropriate species for the street and would not be used today

to line a street due to the way in which their roots spread.

- Despite the fact that the trees are not ideal for the location, there were a number of factors that needed to be considered in this situation. Amongst other things, considerations included health and safety, insurance issues and residents' views on the matter.
- Any way of managing trees on Burnham Avenue would please some residents and not please others.
- The most appropriate way to deal with this situation would involve a compromise – assessing each tree individually and putting together a carefully thought through programme.
- A final decision on these trees would only be made after consultation with all residents of Burnham Avenue. It was estimated that the consultation would take place around March 2013.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met and discussed with petitioners their concerns with the proposed tree removal programme for Burnham Avenue.**
- 2. Considered the recommendation put forward by the petitioners that all 37 Hornbeam trees were retained.**
- 3. Considered the advice of the Council's Tree Officer on the removal and the replacement of all 37 trees over a period of three years.**
- 4. Noted the information received concerning the disruption of the public footpath either side of the road, the kerb alignments, and the lack of minimum space between the trees and the properties for footpath users.**
- 5. Noted that the likelihood of insurance claims against the Council for damage caused to residents' properties from underground and near surface roots from these highway trees was likely to cost significant amounts of money if the trees were retained.**
- 6. Instructed officers to undertake a further survey of all 37 trees in order to develop a programme of retention, removal, crown thinning or replacement based on individual trees.**

Reasons for recommendation

The Cabinet Member discussed in detail with petitioners their concerns and considered the Council's recommendations to remove and replace the highway trees over a three-year period.

Alternative options considered

1. Retention of all 37 trees. This option did not address some of the ongoing issues concerned with highway safety i.e. pedestrian access and trip potential, and vehicle damage from

	<p>protruding kerbs.</p> <p>2. Various tree pruning options. Each tree would have cost £190.81 to prune. One option was to make an assessment to prune the trees that were growing at the front of properties where residents had complained.</p> <p>Another pruning option was to prune a proportion each year i.e. prune all trees over a five-year period, so the costs per year would be £1,335.67 (for seven trees) or £1,526.48 (for eight trees); the total for pruning all 37 trees over five years would be £7,059.97.</p> <p>3. Remove trees without replanting. This option would have cost £291.26 to fell and grind each tree, and £250.00 to reinstate the public footpath. Therefore the total cost for one tree was £541.26, and for all 37 trees the total cost would be £20,026.62.</p>	
7.	<p>THE CLOSSES RECREATION GROUNDS - WEST DRAYTON, PETITION FOR A CYCLE TRACK (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by the lead petitioner included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr Mick McLaughlin spoke on behalf of the petition submitted to the Council. ▪ Cycling had many health benefits and could be linked to a reduction in childhood obesity. ▪ There were currently no safe areas for children or adults to cycle in West Drayton. Information from Transport for London supported this as, when asked, they were unable to provide any safe cycling routes in West Drayton as they could for other Wards. ▪ The Closes Recreation Ground was an ideal place for the development of a cycle track to provide a safe environment for local residents to cycle. The proximity of the site to Laurel Lane Primary School would also allow it to be used by the school for cycling proficiency lessons. ▪ Life expectancy in West Drayton was lower than in other Wards of the Borough. It was suggested that this was linked to the lack of exercise facilities in West Drayton which were available elsewhere. <p>Councillor Anita MacDonald, a West Drayton Ward Councillor, expressed her support for the proposal to introduce a cycle track on the Closes Recreation Ground. This would provide a useful resource for the nearby school. It would also provide significant health benefits to residents of the Ward.</p> <p>Concillor Dominic Gilham noted his support for the proposal as the Closes Recreation Ground was an ideal location to encourage people to cycle more in a safe environment. He stated that he was doubtful of the £200,000 estimate for the delivery of the track set out in the report. Residents were not asking for major work to be done, just a small path around the perimeter that could be used for cycling. He concluded that</p>	<p>Action by</p> <p>Alan Tilly</p>

the south of the Borough deserved as good cycling facilities as those afforded to the north of the Borough.

Councillor Bianco noted that an email had been received from Councillor Buttivant, a West Drayton Ward Councillor, expressing his support for the proposal due to its health and learning benefits. The email noted that he could see no problems with the installation of a cycle track at the Closes and asked that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services instruct officers to review and cost the scheme.

Councillor Jonathan Bianco listened to the concerns of the petitioners and responded to the points raised:

- Whereas there was sympathy for the request for a cycling track, the key consideration in this petition was the cost associated with the project.
- The Council did have some funding from Section 106 and from the Mayor of London for such projects but £200,000 was a considerable sum which could not necessarily be provided by the Council.
- Despite the significant cost of the project, officers would be asked to seek funding and assess the viability of the cycle track.
- Petitioners and Councillors would be informed of the outcome of officer investigations.
- The Council had a great number of projects that it would like to support but was unable to because of funding restraint.
- There were areas of West Drayton where it was safe to allow children to cycle on the roads with parental supervision and sufficient training.
- Local schools had a role in projects like this and it was advised that petitioners should gain the support of school governors to help provide cycling facilities.

Officers advised that:

- The £200,000 estimate for the project was based on a 3 meter wide cycle track around the full perimeter of the Closes Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met and discussed with petitioners their aspirations for a cycle track around the edge of The Closes Recreation Ground, The Green, West Drayton.**
- 2. Instructed officers to consider the petitioners' suggestions, undertake further studies and report back to him.**

Reasons for recommendation

Gave the Cabinet Member the opportunity to discuss in detail the petitioners' concerns.

Alternative options considered

	There were none considered at this stage.	
8.	<p>RESPONSE TO PETITION RECEIVED IN CONNECTION WITH THE COUNCIL'S CEMETERIES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by the petitioners included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mrs Murphy spoke on behalf of the petition submitted to the Council. Mrs Murphy's son had been buried at West Drayton Cemetery for 20 years. ▪ The action plan for work on the Cemetery that had been drawn together by officers was seen to be a good start at improving the condition of the Cemetery but it was suggested that much of the work outlined in the plan was not being progressed. ▪ The action plan treated some regular, ongoing areas of work as though they were one-off jobs such as removing litter and road sweeping. ▪ Drains at the Cemetery were full of mud and tarmac and were not draining properly. ▪ Cutting of the hedging at the Cemetery had not been done for a number of years. ▪ Due to the lack of toilet facilities on site, there were areas of the Cemetery that had become used for human fouling. ▪ There was only one caretaker at the site and there was too much work for him to do feasibly. This revealed a disparity with other Cemeteries in the area which had three caretakers. ▪ In some areas of the Cemetery vehicles had driven over the grass verge, left ditches and hit and damaged headstones. ▪ It was noted that petitioners had been asking for improvement work to be done at the Cemetery for over 20 years. ▪ There appeared to be disparity between the size of headstones that people were allowed to erect with some far bigger than the agreed dimensions. <p>Councillor Anita MacDonald, a West Drayton Ward Councillor, noted that there was consensus in the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee's review of cemeteries in the Borough that there were much higher standards at Cherry Lane Cemetery than at West Drayton Cemetery. She suggested that the rationalising of staff would be advisable and the two sites should be treated as equal.</p> <p>Councillor Jonathan Bianco listened to the concerns of the petitioners and responded to the points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The upkeep of West Drayton Cemetery needed to be looked at and there was work that the Council clearly needed to undertake. ▪ Unfortunately, the Council did not have an endless reserve of funds to undertake all the work it would like to on the Cemetery. ▪ It was noted that petitioners may have an expectation of quality for the Cemetery that the Council could not provide. The Council needed to communicate more clearly what level of quality it could provide and work to achieve that quality. However, it was noted that the Council's intended level of quality had not yet 	<p>Action by</p> <p>John Purcell</p>

been reached.

- The Cemetery would be expanded due to demand. Alongside this work some of the current problems would be resolved.
- Disparity in the sizing of headstones was an issue but the work of the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee would curtail this problem in the future.

Officers advised that:

- In the previous year there had been significant improvements made to the Cemetery and work was ongoing. A 5 year plan had been developed for the Cemetery and a considerable amount of money was being spent to improve standards.
- There were problems that still needed to be resolved with water supply, taps, damage to grass verge, paving and various other areas.
- Problems with insufficient staffing were under the control of the Council's Green Spaces Team. These issues would be taken up with officers in that team.
- The Council was currently dealing with roughly 5,000 problematic graves and was doing so on a priority basis.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Member:

- 4. Met the petitioners and considered their petition for improvements to West Drayton Cemetery.**
- 5. Noted that work was to be carried out by officers as per the Action Plan set out in the report.**
- 6. Instructed officers to communicate to petitioners what works were to be undertaken and what standards could be expected.**

Reasons for recommendation

Allowed the Cabinet Member to consider the petition with the petitioners.

Alternative options considered

These were identified from the discussions with the petitioners.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.17 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Maiden on 01895 250472. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.