

Minutes

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

2 July 2014

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Jonathan Bianco (Chairman)</p> <p>Also Present: Councillor Mohinder Birah Councillor Narinder Garg Councillor Jagjit Singh</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Paul Richards, (Green Spaces and Leisure Services Manager) Nadia Williams (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
7.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
8.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC. (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that the item would be considered in public.</p>
9.	<p>CERNE CLOSE POCKET PARK, YEADING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Concerns, comments and suggestions raised by the petition organiser at the meeting included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Had no opposition in general to the development of a pocket park in the land between Cerne Close and Camden Avenue but was very concerned that it was created without first consulting with residents• Residents' views were therefore not taken into consideration and were neither given the opportunity to voice any possible concerns or suggestions• Expressed serious concerns about security issues that had now been exacerbated by the creation of the pocket park, namely that it would now be very easy for people to climb and jump over the boundary fence into residents' gardens• Concerned about the effect that this would now have on vulnerable people who were living on their own• The area already suffered from anti-social behaviour with off licence located close by, people would find it easier now to congregate and consume purchased alcohol in the pocket park which is located in a secluded area• The erection of a bench in this most secluded area would also invite drug users• Believed that PC Ian Woodbridge had not been aware of the project

- Welcomed the fact that a further grave concern relating to the issue of fly tipping had been dealt with
- Questioned what residents were expected to do following the closure of the civic amenity site in South Ruislip and suggested that this closure would result in worsening the problem of fly tipping
- Felt that the idea of cultivating a wildlife area would no longer be feasible, as the trees had been bull dozed, chopped down and taken away
- Suggested that there were other options that could have been explored for the site such as, giving residents the opportunity to buy the land or left as it was, cleared of rubbish and protected from fly tipping
- A proposition to purchase the land was put forward by residents in 1999
- Indicated strongly that it was probable that residents would not use the pocket park, given the close proximity of Brookside and Minet parks and feared instead, that it would be used by people who would see it as an opportunity to commit crime
- Felt that officer's report was biased, as it appeared to suggest that the issue was a 'done deal' and did not consider that the Council had in this case abided to its slogan of 'putting residents first'
- Did not accept that the issue of fly-tipping was a good enough reason to open up the area
- Acknowledged that setting up a 'friends' group would be beneficial, as it would involve the community and encourage positive use of the land.

Ward Councillors (Cllr) in attendance raised the following points:

- Fully supported residents petition against the creation of the pocket park, which appeared to have been done without the consent of residents
- Very much in favour of the creation of green spaces where feasible, however, considered that this scheme had been created without any consultation with residents to established whether a pocket park was needed in this area
- The area already benefited from Minet County Park which was very nearby
- Acknowledged that the land needed to be cleared to prevent fly- tipping but suggested that even this should have been done much sooner, particularly as the Council was responsible for ensuring the land was cleared of illegally dumped rubbish
- Highlighted that the Council was also responsible for prosecuting fly-tippers
- Concerned that opening up this land would result in having a detrimental effect on residents
- Submitted that £25,000 could have been better spent and the land could either have been put to better use or sold
- Suggested that Ward Councillors would welcome the Council spending more money to clean up the Brookside area
- Stressed that residents' main concern was the lack of consultation in developing the land.

A representative attended in place of John McDonnell, MP who had sent his apologies as he was on another engagement. The representative commented and raised the following points:

- It was clear that residents' concerns had not been taken into

consideration

- Suggested that creation of the pocket park would neither resolve the issue of fly-tipping nor act as a deterrent to fly-tippers
- Advised that Mr McDonnell, MP had written to the Council asking for the works to be halted
- Having lost the civic amenity site in Dawley Road, Hayes some years ago, feared that the loss of a further site in South Ruislip would exacerbate the problem of fly-tipping
- Suggested that other options was needed to be explored and expressed concerns that it was clear that this was the first opportunity that residents had been given to discuss and be consulted on the issue
- Expressed alarm that work had been completed even before residents had been made aware of the development, which they implied was undemocratic.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services, listened to the concerns of petitioners and responded to the points raised. Cllr Bianco could not comment on the claim about the proposition to purchase land in 1999, but advised that John McDonnell, MP had sent an email requesting consideration be given to selling the land to residents. The email was passed on to the appropriate department for possible consideration of the proposal.

Cllr Bianco reassured petitioners that the Council took the issue of fly-tipping very seriously and advised that officers searched through and investigated dumped rubbish in their efforts to catch and prosecute offenders. The Cabinet Member however stressed that the Council could not allow the issue of anti-social behaviour to prevent undertaking projects to improve the Borough. Petitioners were also informed that the Council carried out consultations in general and invariably, some people would be consulted, and suggested just as in the case of the petitioners, only some people and not all had been represented.

Whilst he empathised with petitioners about the closure of the Civic Amenity site in South Ruislip, Cllr Bianco advised that the site was closed by the West London Waste Authority and not by the Council.

It was explained that the Council generally looked at sites in all areas to try and enhance the Borough, particularly as residents were often concerned about their surrounding areas. The Cabinet Member highlighted that the Borough had gained more green flag awards (an award which benchmarked national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK) than any other boroughs in the country. Cllr Bianco advised that in order to attain these green flags, the Council was required to upkeep and maintain the areas.

Cllr Bianco explained that the Council would usually look at land to build houses but as this was a small piece of land with concealed feeder pipes running underneath, this was not feasible. Having taken a walk in the area, it was clear that the rear track was hardly used and little evidence of vehicular use, due to the growth of the length of the grass. It was also pointed out that the 2metre fence that had been erected was bigger than the size of the fence that had been replaced.

The Cabinet Member informed petitioners that whilst he understood their concerns, he could not at this stage commit to discontinuing the works or to sell the land to petitioners. He stated that for now, the works would continue but the park would remain

locked and suggested that residents should form a local friends group. Cllr Bianco further suggested that the pocket park could perhaps be put to use by schools or small groups. Either way, the Cabinet Member confirmed that a decision could not be made at this meeting.

With regard to John McDonnell, MP writing to the Council, petitioners were advised that as well as approaching their MP, they should also seek further support by contacting their Ward Councillors with issues of concern.

Officers reported that the Council had cleared up an undesirable piece of land which was full of rubbish caused by fly-tipping. It was explained that the idea was to enhance the land and create something that would be of benefit to residence, particularly as calls had been received from residents asking the Council to address the problem. Officers pointed out that the term 'pocket park' was used to describe a piece of land that had fallen into disrepair, which was then developed and transformed into something that residents could use.

Petitioners were informed that the Council's aim was not to allow the issue of anti-social behaviour to prevent work in neglected areas from being undertaken to improve the Borough. In doing such works, officers generally worked hard and closely with other partners including the Police to ensure the success of any project.

The meeting noted that issues of concerns relating to the land had been brought to the attention of the Council and in turn officers had had responded to try and address those concerns. Officers advised that a large proportion of the money was spent on clearing the rubbish. It was re-iterated that the aim of the project was to give something back to the community. Officers concluded that petitioners' concerns and comments had been noted and further consideration would now be undertaken as to the best way forward.

Resolved - That the Cabinet Member would give further consideration to the issue and following consultation with other parties and providers, petitioners would be notified of his conclusion in due course.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.55 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nadia Williams on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.