

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 28 March 2024

Venue: The Atrium - Perceval House

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair) J Ball, M Rice, H Haili, F Conti (Vice-Chair), R Baaklini, M Hamidi, K Nagpal, S Padda and B Wesson

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tighe, Driscoll, Anderson, Mohamed and Kaur Dheer.

Councillors Mahmood, Kingston and Kelly were present as substitutes.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Urgent Matters

The Chair informed the Committee that he had agreed to take the Call-in of Key Officer Decision: Delivering 10 new parks – Future of Perivale Park Golf Course as an urgent item. This was because the call-in was made after the agenda had been published and taking the item to this meeting would mean that there wasn't any undue delay in implementing the decision should it be upheld.

5 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 are agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

6 Call-in of Key Officer Decision: Delivering 10 new parks Future of Perivale Park Golf Course

Councillors Hersch and Gallant presented the reasons the item was called in. This included:

- Perivale Golf course was one of two remaining municipal courses in the Borough which offered affordable and accessible golf in a pay and play format.

- The option to integrate a golf course into the regional park had been dismissed too hastily. It was possible to reconfigure the course to make it more sustainable, including planting more trees and reconfiguring the course.
- The closure of the course would have a detrimental impact on older people, for whom the course was more accessible than the neighbouring Brent Valley Golf Course.
- The consultation was insufficient, only a small sample of residents were consulted and as the golf course closure was proposed as part of a wider suite of improvements it meant that there were many respondents who did not play golf being consulted.

Peter George, Strategic Director for Economy and Sustainability, responded to the issues raised in the call-in:

- When taking the decision to close the course, Peter took into account fairness, impacts on health and wellbeing, impacts on the climate, the results of the Equalities Analysis Assessment and the outcome of the extensive consultation carried out.
- The Equalities Analysis Assessment identified that closing the golf course would be detrimental to older people who played golf. However overall there was a net positive impact on equalities as closing the course allowed a reconfiguration of the land to open up 52 Hectares of parkland open to a wider range of residents, including older people. This would help achieve the Borough's objectives around reducing health inequalities.
- A study showed that there was a surplus of other golf courses in the Borough, as well as adjoining Boroughs, as well as another municipal course offering pay and play at affordable rates less than a mile away.
- Closing the course and converting it into a park would help to achieve the Council's climate and sustainability goals which would be a net positive for residents across the Borough.
- The alternatives put forward by the club had been seriously considered but fell well short of ambitions the Council had for the use of the land. For example additional trees suggested for the site in the alternative use put forward were around 200, whereas the Council expects to add thousands of new trees to the new park.

At the conclusion of the presentations, the Committee question Peter George. The following questions were asked:

- Was the consultation promoted asking residents to have their say on a regional park or on the closure of Perivale Park Golf Course?
- Did the consultation outline the alternative provision at Brent Valley Park Golf Course?
- What would happen to public toilets on the course?
- Why was the closure proposed to happen so soon?
- Were the alternative options fully considered and did the consultation make it clear about how the course was uniquely suitable for older

people?

- When taking the decision, was it clear how the decision achieved the Council's objectives in its Strategic Plan?

Peter George responded to the questions asked as follows:

- The consultation was comprehensive and covered both the closure of Perivale Golf Course and the formation of the Regional Park. The result of the consultation was decisively in favour of closing the Golf Course in order to facilitate the creation of the Regional Park.
- The café and toilets would remain open after the closure of the Golf Course. This arrangement would be reviewed to assess viability after a period of time.
- The timetable for implementation should not be a surprise as it was outlined in the initial report proposing the creation of the Regional Park in October 2023. The course was proposed to close in June to allow residents the opportunity to use the new park during the school summer holidays as this was peak season for use of parks.
- Peter met with users of the Golf Course to discuss some of the proposals put forward on reconfiguration of the course but the alternative options fell far short of what was suitable. It needed to be understood that the use of land as a golf course is fundamentally different to sue of land as a park, the main difference being you can use a park without the risk of being hit by a golf ball. There was a greater positive impact to a greater number of people by closing the Golf Course and converting the land to a park.
- Proceeding with this decision would help contribute to many of the Council's strategic objectives. It would be climate positive, help tackle health inequalities and provide quality jobs.

Having heard the questions and answers, Councillor Hersch summed up reasons for the call-in. Councillor Hersch argued that the decisions should be sent back to the decision maker so that the decision could be delayed in order to explore options for retaining the golf course within the regional park.

Peter George then summed up his response to the call in and conveyed to the Committee that he had taken the decision having had regard to the consultation and information contained within the report. Closing the Golf Course would have a positive impact on the climate and on residents in the borough overall from day one. Although there would be a negative impact on users of the golf course there would be a net positive impact overall for the Borough.

The Committee then debated the reasons for the call in. The issue of urgency and whether the call-in could have waited to the April meeting of OSC was discussed, however the Committee concluded that a full consultation had been carried out and the timetable for taking the decision clearly set out back in October 2023 so it was important not to delay decision making any further than was necessary. Overall, it was felt that the principals of decision making had been followed appropriately when the decision was taken.

A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED:

That the decision be upheld.

7 Youth Justice Service Plan

Suzy Grihault, Ealing Young Justice Service Manager presented the Youth Justice Service Plan. The following witnesses were also present:

- Angie Dennison, Assistant Director of Early Help (Ealing Council);
- Carol Roberts, Head of Service for Ealing and Hillingdon Probation Service (HM Probation Service);
- Detective Chief Inspector Andy Jackson (Metropolitan Police); and
- Sergeant Fiona Watts (Metropolitan Police).

The Committee heard that the Youth Justice Service plan was a collaborative document which relied on contributions from the Council, as well as partner organisations including the Police and the Probation Service. The Council was statutorily required to produce this service plan under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The plan had to be considered by members, and this could be the Cabinet Member, Council or a Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of presenting the plan to the Committee late in the year was to ensure the Committee was fully up to speed with the plan with a view to giving the Committee an opportunity to feed into the service plan for 2024/25 at an earlier stage in the year.

Following the presentation, the Committee asked the following questions:

- Were there any success stories that could be shared on diversionary work?
- What was the take-up of restorative justice?
- What was the service doing to address the disproportionality of Black boys involved in the criminal justice system?
- As the majority of entrants to the criminal justice system were boys, were there enough positive male role models working in this area and the youth service?
- What actions were taken where children were found to be exploited into selling drugs, or other criminality, for adults? What did the Police do to convict adults who were exploiting children?
- As children in care made up a significant proportion of the service users, what steps could be taken to try and avoid their entry into the criminal justice system.

In responses to the questions asked, the Committee heard that:

- In terms of diversionary work, the Youth Justice Service collaborated

with the council's employment and training team to ensure that there were job opportunities for young people who were had entered or were at risk of entering the criminal justice system. An example of this was a job placement, which had recently been made permanent, at Greener Ealing for a boy who had previously been involved in some high level criminality.

- Every victim of crime was offered the opportunity to take part in restorative justice. There was around a 50% response rate to the offer, but a much lower proportion of victims then went on to take up restorative justice. Restorative justice took the form of correspondence between the victim and perpetrator, but face to face meetings did not take place.
- The service had a disproportionality plan to try and address any disproportionality in young people who were involved in the criminal justice system. The service would be happy to share the disproportionality plan with Councillors for further scrutiny.
- It was difficult to recruit and retain men working for the Youth Justice Service, but attempts were made. This was a problem across the service, not just for Ealing. However the Council's Youth Service had a diverse group of youth workers from different communities and of different genders.
- If a child was found to be a victim of exploitation by adults, they would be removed from the criminal justice system and instead treated as a victim of modern slavery. This meant taking them down a pathway called the 'National Referral Mechanism' which was a clearly defined route to provide support, counselling and rehabilitation for victims.
- Adults who were suspected of exploiting children into criminality would be placed under surveillance. This was often undertaken by the gangs team as organised crime was involved in this criminality. Covert surveillance was used to gather further information and evidence about the perpetrator in the hope of securing a conviction. Surveillance would include phone intercepts, social media activity and traditional under cover surveillance.
- Better quality therapeutic placements for children in care within London would help to improve the diversion rate of children in care from the criminal justice system.

The Chair thanked officers and partner agencies for their contributions and invited them to bring their plan back to the committee the following year for the Committee to give some earlier feedback.

RESOLVED:

That the Council should prioritise seeking a greater proportion of therapeutic placements within London for children in care who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

Suzy Grihault, Ealing Young Justice Service Manager presented this item to the Committee.

The Committee heard that the Council's Youth Justice Service had been inspected by HMIC and overall the service had been graded as requires improvement. The main area that had been marked as an area for improvement was out of court disposals. But leadership and governance and some areas of court disposals were also areas of concern. Following the inspection, an action plan had been drawn up to address the areas that required improvement, this action plan was presented to the committee for consideration and comment

Some specific actions that had been taken to address these issues were ensuring Police representation at board level, a new tool for out of court disposals had been launched which was being bedded in and additional manager oversight of implementation of this new tool.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Sam Bailey introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. The Committee were informed that it was coming to the end of the year. Feedback from members and officers alike had been that this year's model of scrutinising Strategic Directorates and focussing on making recommendations throughout the year had been received well. Therefore it was proposed that this model would be proposed for formal agreement at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme is noted.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 9.34 pm

Signed:

Dated:

Y Gordon (Chair)