

Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum Environment & Sustainability Subgroup meeting

Notes from 2nd meeting, held on Tuesday 07 November 2017 at 6.30pm
at the Labour Group Office, Room 102, Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2UH.

Attendees

Mick Oliver	Harrow University of the Third Age (Sustainability Group) – Acting Chair
Kathy Westhead	Harrow University of the Third Age (Sustainability Group)
Gerry Devine	Harrow VCS Forum Vice-Chair, Harrow Community Transport
Phil Bryson	Harrow Green Drinks
Steve Bolsover	Harrow Nature Conservation Forum
Simon Braidman	Harrow Nature Conservation Forum
Swan Kazi	Harrow Parks Forum
Jane Galbraith	Harrow Parks Forum
Jane Skelly	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Judy Walker	Harrow in Leaf
Linda Robinson	38 Degrees Local Harrow Group - Notetaker
Cllr Graham Henson	Harrow Council, Environment Portfolio Holder

Apologies

Pamela Swain	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Bernard Burns	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Jo Telfer	Harrow Beekeepers

1. **Welcome** by Acting Chair, Mick, and **Introductions** all round – Thanks to Graham for attending to answer members' questions on Subgroup's identified priority concerns under his Portfolio:
 - air quality
 - water pollution
 - transport and car usage issues
 - protecting biodiversity, Green Belt, parks and other open spaces
 - waste and recycling
2. **Notes from the last meeting** approved as correct.
3. **Questions and Answers** – only just received by Graham. Recap of council's four year £100m budget gap. Harrow's input on London-wide strategies sent to Mayor's Office.

3.1 **Why is there not a Harrow Traffic Plan?** *The current piecemeal assessment of the traffic and transport impact of many different planning applications, some of which understate the number of extra car journeys generated, means there is no overall forecast of the future usage of Harrow's road network, or of demand for buses and trains, or for cycle and pedestrian routes. The Mayor's Transport Strategy is too generalised, and a local transport and traffic plan is needed. Without it, and measures to reduce dependency on private cars, the constant approval of multiple planning applications moves Harrow closer to total gridlock, its residents to asphyxiation and our planet to catastrophic burnout. **Please can you do something about it?***

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Graham's answer: Traffic plans cost a lot. Outside agency already commissioned to produce Wealdstone Traffic Plan, to be published this month. Traffic modelling, looking at 5 to 10 year impact, then can ask for extra bus routes, train frequencies, improvements for walking and cycling etc. Harrow now highest car usage levels and lowest for bikes. Already bidding for scheme in Wealdstone from TfL's '[Liveable Neighbourhoods](#)' programme. Council's [Transport and Road Safety Advisory Panel](#) (TARSAP) responsible for traffic. Input to Mayor's Transport Strategy arguing for better orbital bus connectivity in outer London

boroughs and greater decision making powers e.g. re electric vehicles, but need investment in charging infrastructure.

Re public transport, [Krishna Suresh](#)'s recent council motion calling for step free access at Rayners Lane station - unfortunately weakened by hasty amendment to include stations in other wards, but Stanmore inexplicably omitted.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Large developments without residents' parking unlikely to improve traffic conditions.

Rationale for a lift at Stanmore at least as strong as Rayners Lane – orthopaedic hospital, ageing demographic, long-running campaign, even more steps.

Lack of tram route options, as only one feasible disused railway line... The Rattler.

Actions:

Graham to send Wealdstone Traffic Plan to Subgroup ([Mick](#)) when available.

Linda to send details of next TARSAP meeting to Subgroup members ([28 Nov](#)).

3.2 In your position as portfolio holder, how are you going to protect Harrow's parks given the pressures on the local authority, in particular how will you persuade your Cabinet not to build on Byron Park or any other park or designated open space?

(question from Harrow Parks Forum)

Graham's answer: Unaware that Byron Quarter proposals involve a net loss of designated open space, in contravention of council's own [Open Space Strategy](#) and Local Plan. No knowledge of Regeneration Team's outline planning application to build two high rise blocks within the curtilage of Byron Recreation Ground itself.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Recommend Graham or colleague to attend [Effectively Managing Parks & Green Spaces](#) event (11am, 30 Nov).

Admission by Planning's Paul Nichols - net loss of open space designed 'by mistake', ignorant of Open Space Strategy commitments. Portfolio Holder's responsibilities include implementing Open Space Strategy. Confusing official calculation of loss at 1.9%, misleadingly minimised by inclusion of new 'pocket parks'.

Planned 'soakaway' not considered sufficient flood alleviation to mitigate effects of such intensive development.

Fear of future such 'nibbling' of other parks and green spaces in Harrow.

Council being pressurised to sell off all unused property, e.g. residential builds on existing footprint of derelict sheds, even in Green Belt open spaces like Stanmore Common.

Expensive to pursue legal action to protect parks.

'Fields in Trust' Deeds of Dedication being explored by Harrow Parks Forum, to protect parks in perpetuity in contract with council as landowner. Harrow among lowest take up of scheme so far. Plea for council to sign all parks up for the scheme.

Actions:

Graham to familiarise himself with proposed Byron Quarter's encroachment on Byron Park, oppose any plans to reduce total designated open space and report back to Subgroup ([Mick](#)).

Swan to send Deeds of Dedication details to Graham for council consideration.

3.3 Six areas of the borough have been identified as Air Quality Action Zones. What action is the council taking to monitor and improve air quality in these areas?

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Graham's answer: Equipment being installed to measure air pollution before deciding what to do about it. Council has limited powers to restrict polluting vehicles, can only designate non-major roads as lorry-free and enforce weight limits on lorry parking. London Mayor's permission needed for any restricted time zones on major routes. Powers now curbed for penalising drivers for idling engines outside schools at collection time.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

School Traffic Plans not working, not keeping up with scale of development.

Action:

Graham to advise Subgroup ([Mick](#)) what type of monitoring machines are being used where, and the outcomes when known.

3.4 **Please can you tell us what happens to the contents of each of our domestic waste and recycling bins?** *Where do the different types of waste and recycling get sent, for what purpose and at what cost or reward to the council?* (question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Graham's answer: Waste collection by council, disposal by West London Waste Authority. Food waste goes for anaerobic digestion. No longer going to Harefield, SITA transport it somewhere. Will eventually go via SITA's transfer station at South Ruislip. Residual waste goes by train to SITA's 'burn-up site' at Severnside near Bristol, for energy recovery. Unburnt 3% goes from there to landfill. Blue bin recycling goes to a Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF).

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Misleading and contradictory information on council website re recycling collections, e.g. textiles. Old instructions still easily found. Current instructions mismatch with [Waste Management Strategy](#).

Actions:

Graham to let Subgroup ([Mick](#)) know exact destinations of garden waste and food waste.

Kathy to give Graham details of the inaccurate webpages.

Graham to get the incorrect information updated/removed from the website.

3.5 **How do you explain Harrow's failure to meet its recycling targets and how can we help to improve these?** (question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Graham's answer: Fluctuations in recycling rates, partly down to Brexit! Wood waste no longer counts as recycling, so not now separated. Surrounding boroughs charging for residents' non-recyclable building waste at their tips, so non-Harrow residents using Harrow tip for free without ID. Anomaly to be fixed by imminent new Harrow ID/charging scheme. Replacement Recycling Officer now in post. Council ambition to follow other boroughs in owning its own MRF (outside Harrow).

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Impending confusion at the tip, as leaflets no longer given to unsuspecting users about rule changes and charges effective 13 Nov.

3.6 **With all the extra development planned for Harrow, what is being done to ensure that sewerage, waste disposal and water supply systems will be able to cope with the increased pressure?** (question from Harrow Green Drinks)

Graham's answer: Two major water mains bursts in Wealdstone only this week, due to ageing supply pipes. Council working with Affinity Water to fix and prevent repeat. Rainwater harvesting also being explored. Onus on utility suppliers to provide adequate infrastructure. Council enforcement action not possible unless planning permissions breached.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Council can refuse planning permission until satisfied re upgraded utilities provision to match additional demand.

Pollution, especially phosphates, in waterways due to waste water misconnections by builders. Thames Water's responsibility.

Danger of no one seeing the 'big picture' – total of all new major developments together placing too much added pressure on existing utilities infrastructure.

3.7 **How is the council measuring the success of the garden waste collection charging scheme?** (question from Harrow 38 Degrees Local Group)

Graham's answer: Sign-up rate 26,000 out of 72,000 households, compares well with other boroughs. Increased composter sales. Increase in garden waste collected at the tip, but not as much as hoped. £2m contributed to council budget.

Council's commercial arm, 'Project Phoenix', also delivering council income, e.g. trade waste increasing, gardening services operating OK, advertising and contracts happening.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Extra garden waste taken to the tip causing very long queues at busy times, leading to increased air pollution, fuel consumption, bus delays and fly-tipping.

Residents urged to volunteer in parks while paying park staff to do their gardening for them!

3.8 **What are you doing to put more accountable and transparent structures in place to replace the chaotic management committees** that are supposed to make decisions about spending and plans for our wide open spaces which are not considered to be parks?

(question from 38 Degrees Harrow Local Group)

Graham's answer: Not really aware how the Management Committees work.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Management Committee for Greater Stanmore Country Park effective and well chaired by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum.

Questionable governance and decision making at Bentley Priory Nature Reserve Management Committee, chaired by councillor. New representative of the public now co-opted.

Councillors now compulsory on the committee of any new Friends Group for certain open spaces only, e.g. new Friends group planned for Stanmore Common.

3.9 **Please can you give us all a list of key council officers to liaise with** about each of our areas of interest (above), and the best ways to contact them for a speedy response?

(question from 38 Degrees Harrow Local Group)

Graham's answer: True that council policy is for staff not to be distracted from their jobs by answering calls and emails. Dave Corby best contact for most environmental issues.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Most unlikely to get any response from Dave Corby by phone or email.

Action:

Graham to provide Subgroup ([Mick](#)) with a list of council contacts covering each of its priority areas under the Environment Portfolio.

4. **Other matters discussed**

4.1 **Redevelopment at Forward Drive.** Plans for new depot/offices/layout. Base for Project Phoenix operations. Energy Plant potential. Concrete site difficult to restructure. Insufficient room for desired compactor units at recycling centre. No space to store Harrow Parks Forum tools at the depot. Pool cars to be kept there for staff at new Civic Centre.

4.2 **Smart litter bins**, with sensors and compactors. Suggested but not favoured. Expensive. Tried at some councils, stopped as no saving.

Action:

Swan to research into effectiveness of smart litter bins.

4.3 **CCTV**, requested to catch fly tippers, drug dealers, rough sleepers etc. in parks. Considered ineffective by Graham. Evidence not clear, number plates often disguised. Seven cameras failed to catch fly tipping culprits in Harrow Weald. Rising bollards experiment also failed to keep out vehicles. Police, not council, to deal with drug offences, but not enough police.

4.4 **New Corporate Director of Community** appointed by council, [Paul Walker](#), overall boss over community engagement department, commissioning and commercial services.

5. **Next meeting** – Mick to follow up and continue to act as subgroup chair until after next meeting, hopefully in January. Agreed to get Paul Nichols, Harrow's Divisional Director of Regeneration and Planning, to answer and discuss questions on further subgroup priorities (re development etc.), if possible. Meeting details to be confirmed.