

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday, 30 November 2021 at 4pm at the Guildhall.

Present

Councillor Lee Mason (in the Chair)
Matthew Atkins
Stuart Brown
Charlotte Gerada
Jo Hooper
Leo Madden

- 30. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**
No apologies were received.
- 31. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**
No interests were declared.
- 32. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**
RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November be agreed as a correct record.
- 33. Review into biodiversity enhancement in urban Portsmouth (AI 4)**
The Chair gave an update on the review into accessibility of transport network:
- The survey will be launched tomorrow.
 - The accompanying media release statement was read out and agreed.

Trevor Mose, Head of Property & Capital Development, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust explained that:

The Trust commissioned council landscape architects to design and project manage the development of an area on the south side of the site which is now called the Garden of Life. This was an exemplar project that is well loved by staff and patients.

Following that success, the council's landscape architects' team was asked what the trust could do to increase biodiversity around the whole site. Many opportunities were identified planting trees, hedgerows, wildflowers, creating more green spaces, biodiversity, microhabitats, green walls and green roofs. These have informed a biodiversity and greening strategy for the QA hospital site.

The Trust is keen to recognise the health benefits associated with biodiversity and is considering how people use the area as it has a connection to the broader wellbeing agenda. The benefits of people having access to green

spaces are significant and hospital medics have undertaken a literature review with the Public Health team to draw together evidence of this.

Discussions are taking place with the Trust Executive, the hospital charity, staff and volunteers to get them involved. Donations of seeds and bird boxes have been made and the Hospital Charity is looking to support..

An implementation plan is being drawn up for the Executive and includes both short term and long term projects.

The Trust recognises that greening does not respect boundaries and therefore have been talking to the Portsdown Hill Ranger about how staff could access this adjacent nature reserve more easily during their breaks.

In response to questions from the panel Mr Mose clarified the following points:

He does not know the Grow Wymering group or have connections to St Peter & Pauls Church and Wymering Manor but the Trust is keen to consider planting fruiting trees on the site and recognises their value for biodiversity.

He is not aware of any Council policies that are hindering the Trust's ambition. the Trust recognises a number of synergies with the council particularly in relation to greening and sustainability

The Trust recognises its responsibilities towards its staff's wellbeing and the environment.

The relationship between the council and the trust has grown over the three years that he has been in post. Recognising that the NHS has been quite isolated historically.

Public Health and medics at the Trust have published research showing the health benefits of biodiversity.

Discussions are taking place with the hospital's grounds maintenance contractors about changing the cutting regimes to improve biodiversity e.g. not to cut back the greenery so much and not to sweep up the leaves.

The value and quality of existing trees has been assessed as part of the strategy by the council's landscape team. Some flowering cherry trees have had to be removed as they were not in great condition. Others will be planted elsewhere. The biodiversity strategy will help ensure that a mixture of trees are planted in the right locations and there is a succession, not static landscape.

Green walls look amazing but require a considerable amount of maintenance. The location must be carefully considered due to the potential fire risks. In a carpark in Liverpool, a fire took hold very quickly by racing across the green wall. The green wall that was being considered at a carpark at the hospital has been removed from the proposals.

The strategy identifies many possible measures that could be implemented around the site, but the Trust will be mindful of the ongoing cost burden. The strategy will be kept under review.

The designs for a sensory garden at the side of the new ward block (for stroke and neurophysical rehabilitation services) are being finalised now. This would include tactile paving, steps, a rail alongside planting beds and sensory borders to support patients' recovery and provide enjoyment while they stay. It is hoped to start work in Spring 2022. The Trust will be submitting a Neighbourhood CIL application to support this work.

Staff would benefit enormously from being able to access Portsdown Hill during their breaks. A gateway is being considered and it is hoped that this will open in Summer.

The trust enjoys a good working relationship with the council.

St Mary's Community Hospital is managed by Solent NHS Trust.

During the discussion that followed, Councillors noted:

1. Their support of the Trust's approach and acknowledgement of the work the hospital is doing at this time.
2. Many staff sit on the bank on Southwick Hill and would benefit from a bench. As this would not be within the trust's remit, perhaps some community infrastructure levy funding could be released for
3. There had been an issue with some tall trees along the hospital boundary which had to be cut back by Colas for safety reasons.

Mr Goff Gleadle, Chair of the Cosham Allotments Association explained that:

He would like to see food grown in communal spaces. This would make the city less reliant on imported food and be very good for the environment. A study carried out by Sheffield University concluded that if food was grown on community space, it would provide for 70% of the city's food requirements.

He is a member of Incredible Edible online group where people grow fruit and vegetables in their own gardens and support each other.

Allotment holders are required to cultivate 70% of their plots.

Most plots are gardened organically at the Cosham allotment site.

It is very environmentally friendly and has 5 active beehives

Three or five plots at this site have been left to go wild in part and the weeds are causing problems for the neighbouring plot holders.

He accompanies council officers when they carry out their inspections four times a year in the growing season. If 70% of the plot is not being cultivated, the inspector will send a warning letter to the plot holder.

There is a 2 ½ year waiting list to have a plot at this site.

In response to questions, he explained that:

A Dirty Plot Notice (DPN) is issued if an inspector considers that 70% of a plot is not being cultivated. Sometimes, rather than issue a DPN, the inspector asks him to nudge the plot holder. If the plot holder does not show they are working to bring the plot back into cultivation by the next inspection, they can be evicted.

Some allotment holders claim that they are rewilding part of their plot. It would be useful if there was a clear definition of the term to differentiate this from simple neglect. This definition could be used across all sites.

The inspectors are very fair as far as he is aware and are quite lenient.

People grow vegetables, flowers and herbs. Some have ornamental scarecrows in them. Not many people grow all year round.

Plots were originally approximately 10m x 20m. Now they are 10m x 12.5m. When they are given up, the council often splits them so that more people can have allotments. They cost approximately £65 per year.

He uses slug pellets on his plot as he has found the natural methods of discouraging slugs and snails to be ineffective. The strict rules regarding organic gardening is off-putting.

He gives talks on container and sensory gardens.

The allotment holders at the Cosham site are receptive to rewilding and improving biodiversity but in his opinion it is already very diverse.

There are 115 members of the association with plots on site and approximately 50 people without plots who live nearby.

He would like the council to plant wildflowers on roundabouts and verges.

On behalf of the panel, the Chair thanked Mr Mose and Mr Gleadle for their time.

Councillor Lee Mason
Chair