

Wandsworth Friends of the Earth Group Meeting,

Tuesday March 15, 2022

Welcome:

Present:

Joe Olding
Oliver Shaw
Irina Charalambous

Terry Brown
Coordinator

Apologies:

Lynne McNulty
Melanie Rowland
William Rhind
Vicki Carol
Stuart Oliver
Debbie Colson

The meeting aimed to follow the published agenda

Priority C: Track and comment on the WESS

- Irina had limited time at the meeting so her report on the Wandsworth Environmental and Sustainability Strategy (WESS) was reviewed first
- The aim of looking at the report is to appraise and question its aims, content and progress. The document is large, but we should pick out some points that seem vague or not capable of having progress checks in the years leading up to 2030 and 'challenge' the council to be more specific and accountable.
- Irina picked out a number of points:
 - **Council vehicles to be electrified by 2030:** current statement vague, needs to be quantified on an annual basis. Reference to ULEV.
 - **Decarbonising the Council Buildings:** Again the statements are vague and do not offer checkable goals. There are in fact a number of things that need to be done to make buildings more energy efficient e.g. insulation, airtightness, efficient means of heating and cooling, low CO₂ energy sources etc.
 - **Improvement of public transport:** WBC basically haven't achieved anything and do not have control over public transport, which is entirely controlled by

TfL. While this is true, public transport and its infrastructure become ever more important as Wandsworth continues to build residential developments.

- **Hiring out e-cargo bikes:** Hard to see the relevance of this as it might be expected that businesses would invest in their own cargo bikes. Proposal doesn't appear well thought out and seems an odd thing to include. We need to ask why the council promotes this and what is its logic & reasoning.
- **EV infrastructure:** Council have installed 725 charging points. It is not clear what the demand is. The need for 1300 charging points has been mentioned, so a little over half this figure might be wrongly claimed as a big achievement. Lamp post chargers do not seem to have dedicated bays so might be difficult for EVs to access. Are lamp post outlets provided at residents request? Need to find out how EV charging points are being integrated into new developments.
- **Air Quality Plan:** While there is much talk about monitoring air quality, it is not clear what the council's plan is to improve it and cut down pollution. We should ask what plans are.
- **Reducing air pollution from delivery vehicles:** Supermarket deliveries and the delivery of on line purchases means that there are increasing numbers of delivery vehicles on the road. How can WBC encourage the adoption of EVs for delivery? Out of hours deliveries also to be considered, though home deliveries currently have an extended full day schedule. Can the various companies collaborate in any way to cut down the number of vehicles? Difficulties with this were envisaged.
- **Encouraging private tree planting:** The council is proposing to publish information about tree planting on the council website. Would be better if the council could identify where trees can be planted by the public (e.g. in school grounds). Council tree planting seems to have missed its target. Do we know where and how many trees have been planted? Also, how many have been chopped down?
- **Encourage businesses to produce less waste:** The council are vague on this, but might be able to offer a one-to-one environmental audit of their waste production as a free service. Can the council influence commercial organisations. Maybe the council can influence business waste through their trading licences? Irina suggested that an auditor employed by the council could work their way around businesses, maybe starting with food suppliers, offering accumulated advice on how to reduce waste or encourage recycling. Might be a way to reach out to businesses who otherwise would not take part in environmental/sustainability activities. Need to understand how much WBC can

dictate to businesses and what are the means. Maybe approach businesses through the Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce.

- **Reducing single use plastic by introducing water fountains in the parks:** It was pointed out that fountains had been very recently installed in Wandsworth Park. Installing park fountains cannot fully address the huge issue of single use plastic bottles. We need to challenge WBC regarding other ways to address the problem of single use plastic. POST MEETING NOTE: There is at least one new water fountain in King Georges Park.
- The above were Irina's main points; she asked if others had anything to add.
- Oliver asked if there was anything on **recycling** in the WESS. There are difficulties with recycling food waste, particularly in apartment buildings. Mixed recycling (In Wandsworth: paper & card; metal cans; plastic bottles and containers; glass jars & bottles) is collected but not food waste. We need to find out more about the food waste pilot scheme being undertaken in Southfields. The aim is to start in 2024. It was pointed out that Greenwich council have been collecting food waste for a number of years.
- The council needs a committed 'road map' for each year working towards 2030 so that accountability, progress and real actions may be checked.
- Irina was asked to crystallise the points she has addressed and then WFOE can go back to the council with comments and questions (challenges!) about activities and progress. **ACTION:** Irina to develop the points and then, following a discussion with Terry, go back to WBC on them and see if we can encourage more tangible action.

Priority A: Environmental credentials of Councillor candidates

- Stuart has done some work on this one. He has written to representatives of the 'main' political parties (Conservatives; Labour; Lib Dems; Green Party). The council is currently tory controlled. We await a response to Stuart's letter. The aim was to get a statement from the various party representatives on their views on the environment and environmental action which we could then publish on our website and through our other media channels.
- Is there anything further we can do? WFOE could collaborate with Merton and/or other groups and maybe get candidates to come and talk to us. Perhaps leading to a public meeting. Joe offered to try to talk to his ward candidates. Terry undertook to email Merton to see if they would like to collaborate with us on this issue. It was pointed out that Stuart had asked for only 200 words, which is very short.

Priority B: Help WBC improve biodiversity in King Georg's Park

- Terry is keen to keep this activity alive. Vicki and Joe have followed up. Joe was in contact with Enable. This activity stream merges to some extent with Priority D.
- Joe's exchange was with Valery Selby, Biodiversity and Parks Development manager for Enable, who is quite responsive. Enable had been doing pruning and coppicing in the park. In some places they had laid the logs down to allow them to rot, providing invertebrate habitat, and in others they had chipped the wood and spread around the area. It seems the spreading of wood chips was a 'mistake' and should not happen again.
- The 'conversation' with Valerie broadened and activities, walks and volunteering were mentioned. She was asking the council officers for details of activities in 2022 as they haven't got going yet.
- KGP is designated as a 'borough site of nature conservation importance', as a wild life corridor adjacent the river Wandle. It was also pointed out that the lake (at the northern end) has high ecological value. It is regarded as rich in aquatic plants and invertebrates with good marginal planting and there are also areas of trees, scrub and ephemeral vegetation and nesting and foraging for birds, in particular, house sparrows. The enclosed area along the banks of the Wandle also provides habitat for birds. There is a small area of acid grassland on the east side of the park at the southern end that is regarded as of ecological value and protected.
- Enable are seeking funding to increase the wild areas in the park and this will offer the opportunity for volunteering. Wandsworth's 'biodiversity strategy' is part of the WESS. If things progress then there will be an opportunity for collaboration with WFOE.
- This was thought to be very positive. Irina pointed out the frequency of 'weed' smoking in the park. It has to be remembered that the park offers many leisure features including children's playground and is well used by local residents and children. We might be able to promote more diversity in the edges to these activity areas. Hedges could be introduced.
- **ACTION:** Joe will continue the dialogue with Valerie Selby and follow up on the various subjects discussed.

Priority D: Raise awareness of Biodiversity crisis

- Vicki and Joe as well as Lynne had been following up various issues related to biodiversity and as mentioned there is considerable overlap with Priority C. It was agreed to leave further discussion of this action stream to a later meeting.

Other Activity Streams

- Terry asked Oliver and Joe whether they had other issues to raise.
- Joe thinks that the examination of the WESS is pretty well all encompassing. **The issue of collaboration comes up in the WESS** and this should be an opportunity for WFOE, but it's not what WBC seem to intend. We should chase this up.
- Oliver raised the issue of Priority A again and there was a discussion about whether we should be doing more than following up on Stuart's letter. Do we know who the candidates are for the various wards yet? Joe suggested that the various members of the WFOE group could be encouraged to contact the candidates in their own wards. Terry thinks we need to ask specific questions as well. **ACTION:** Those present to try to contact the candidates for their individual wards.
- Terry explained that Merton FOE had lodged a letter of objection to the **AELTC proposed extensions into Wimbledon Park**, including a new show court in the park area. Public space will be lost and there will be a substantial impact on nature and biodiversity. The question was raised as to whether this something that WFOE should take up in the way that Merton have. The proposals lie mainly in Merton but also partly in Wandsworth. Joe suggested that various objectors should come together (Merton and Wimbledon Park Association amongst them) and could present a strong opposition. Those present were encouraged to look at the scheme which can be found on line, we can develop our thoughts.

AOB

- The only further issue Terry wanted to raise was about **funding for the group**. The fund will not survive the year at the current rate of spend. There are three fundamentally different ways we could raise funds:
 - (1) We could aim to raise the money ourselves through subscriptions, but attendance at meetings is so low that collecting a sub is frankly impractical in relation to the magnitude of funds we need.

- (2) We could ask for contributions on the street or try to arrange a public meeting that we could ask people to pay to attend. Neither of these is easy to organise, but this is likely to be the most practical route.
 - (3) Another way is that we could get a project set up that central FOE might support with funds or, again for a specific project, an organisation called 'Semble' (<https://semble.org/about/>) creates campaigns that connect purpose-driven businesses with communities to support positive local action.
- The point was made that just shaking boxes in front of people on the street without a specific project or campaign would not work. The point was made that, while we hadn't really bothered trying to raise funds when we arranged events in the past, but now we need to make sure we do it.
 - It was pointed out that the money is going to run out soon.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting is proposed for Thursday April 21

The meeting closed at about 20:15

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