

HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 9 September 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park
Committee held at VIRTUAL MEETING (ACCESSIBLE REMOTELY) -
<https://youtu.be/4TWJPPzEIXs> on Wednesday, 9 September 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

Anne Fairweather (Chair)
Karina Dostalova (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy David Bradshaw
Alderman Prem Goyal
Michael Hudson
Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Deputy Edward Lord
Wendy Mead
Ruby Sayed
Deputy John Tomlinson
Oliver Sells QC (Ex-Officio Member)
John Beyer (Heath & Hampstead Society)
Councillor Richard Cornelius (London Borough of Barnet)
Councillor Thomas Gardiner (London Borough of Camden)

Officers:

Colin Buttery	-	Director of Open Spaces
Bob Warnock	-	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Katherine Radusin	-	PA to Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Richard Gentry	-	Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Jonathan Meares	-	Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager
Declan Gallagher	-	Operational Services Manager
Yvette Hughes	-	Business Manager Hampstead Heath
Paul Maskell	-	Leisure and Events Manager
Mark Jarvis	-	Head of Finance - Citizen Services, Chamberlains
Kristina Drake	-	Media Team, Town Clerk's Department
Leanne Murphy	-	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Christopher Small, Adeline Siew Yin Au, Rachel Evans, Graeme Doshi-Smith and William Upton.

2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

3. ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Members received the Order of the Court of Common Council dated 16 July 2020 appointing the Committee and approving its terms of reference.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

In accordance with Standing Order No.29, the Committee proceeded to elect a Chairman for the ensuing year. The Town Clerk stated the Members that had expressed an interest and Anne Fairweather, being the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected as Chair.

The Chair thanked Members for their support and took the opportunity to welcome new Member Deputy Edward Lord to the Committee.

5. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

The Committee proceeded to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order No. 30. The Town Clerk stated the Members that had expressed an interest and Karina Dostalova, being the only Member expressing their willingness to serve, was duly elected as Deputy Chairman.

6. **APPOINTMENT OF SUB COMMITTEES, CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND GROUPS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk regarding appointments to Committees and Groups for 2020/21.

RESOLVED, that:-

- The terms of reference and composition of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee be noted;
- The terms of reference and composition of both the Highgate Wood Consultative Group and the Queen's Park Consultative Group be approved;
- The Chair and Deputy Chairman to be appointed to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
- John Tomlinson be appointed to the Highgate Wood Consultative Group, and the further two vacancies be deferred until the next meeting of the Grand Committee for appointment, but that William Upton QC would be approached to take up one of the vacancies;
- Ruby Sayed be appointed to the Queen's Park Consultative Group, and the further two vacancies be deferred until the next meeting of the Grand Committee for appointment;
- John Tomlinson be appointed to serve on the Keats House Consultative Committee with the Chair to also attend in an ex officio capacity;
- Wendy Mead be appointed to observe meetings of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee with the Chair to also attend in an ex officio capacity.

7. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the public minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2020 were approved as a correct record.

8. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The draft public minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC) meeting held on 6 July 2020 were received.

The Chair highlighted concerns from HHCC Members regarding the reduction of the CWP funds which were shared with the City Surveyor. A wider review of the CWP across all Open Spaces was taking place and an update would come to the next meeting.

9. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members considered a report of the Superintendent providing an update on matters concerning Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. The following points were made:

- The Superintendent acknowledged the challenges, particularly during July and the August heatwave. Thanks was given to all staff and Heath Hands volunteers for their great work and support.

Waste and recycling

- Staff have begun withdrawing bins across sites, but recycling remains at all faculties.
- The Chair highlighted the significant challenge and resource implications dealing with rubbish and waste continued to be. Whilst Members were glad people visited the sites, it was wished that visitors took their rubbish with them.
- Members voiced support for the initiative and recommended that this approach be reviewed annually.
- A Member stated that other Open Spaces were experiencing the same issues and queried whether a City-wide communications campaign could be instigated to encourage and put responsibility on individuals to take away their own rubbish.
- The Chairman of the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee advised that rubbish was the primary concern discussed over the last three months during meetings and stated that the City Corporation simply could not continue as it was as the costs, resources and time of staff were not sustainable. He agreed that there needed to be a complete change of culture and this would only happen through significant education and to completely stop providing a litter collection service. Support across all Open Spaces was requested.

- The Chair added that the Committee and Officers wanted to spend the budget on facilities not clearing rubbish.
- Members agreed only wider City communications and a programme in collaboration with all Open Spaces Committees and partners, plus the relevant Local Authorities, would bring about the cultural need required.
- The Director of Open Spaces agreed there had been some success with pan-London messaging and that Officers continued to work in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy on how to change behaviours.
- A member highlighted the significance of social media messaging to reach younger audiences.

Cycling

- People continue to be encouraged to walk or cycle instead of using public transport and the Superintendent advised that Officers had a helpful meeting with the London Borough of Camden to discuss the current position.
- The main change to the current position was: *k) The City Corporation committed to undertaking a review of the cycling provision within the mid-term review of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 - 2028. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic this work will commence ahead of the mid-term review, which will take place in 2024. This process will start sooner than anticipated in the autumn.*
- Continued improvements have been made to pathways and signage.
- A Member commended the City's efforts to discuss better cycling provision with Camden. He hoped this might lead to provision of safe cycling routes around the periphery of the Heath, so that there would be no need for the Heath paths to be used for cyclists to commute to work.
- In response to a query concerning electric scooters, Officers confirmed that these had become an increased issue for staff and the constabulary as they were more available and affordable, but there had been no accidents to date. It was confirmed that it was against the byelaws to ride motorised vehicles across the Heath. The Superintendent added that cyclists not riding on paths was a bigger issue.

Cafés

- The proposed timeline previously reported for retendering the leases for the Parliament Hill Fields café and Parliament Hill Fields Lido café was delayed by Covid-19. The new proposal was to extend the leases for 12 months to 12 January 2022.

- Members were advised that the current tenant of the Golders Hill Park café had terminated his lease. The tenant, recognising the City Corporation's difficulty to retender currently and in allegiance to its locals, offered to extend until November 2021. The alternative was to find a temporary tenant and set up a tenancy at will whilst retendering took place.
- A Member observed that there were currently three park cafés in Barnet that were struggling to let and felt that it was best to keep someone in post if possible. It was agreed it made sense to continue with the current tenant whilst the tender was carried out.
- It was recommended that Officers proceed with tendering the leases for the Queen's Park and Highgate Wood café as soon as possible which was also delayed due to the pandemic. Both were currently running via tenancy at will.

Establish a temporary Working Group

- Officers sought approval to establish a small temporary Working Group to progress Forest School Licenses and Fitness Training Licenses.
- The Chair highlighted the significant growth in outdoor fitness training and sport and the opportunity for the City Corporation to tap into this trend for income generation.

Lido Wall

- Members were advised that the boundary wall was regularly breached during lockdown resulting in the installation of a temporary fence with Officers re-evaluating the height and structure to prevent this risk in future.
- A planning application was prepared but Officers agreed it would need amending to seek additional lighting, removal of the temporary fence and edit the booking system numbers to achieve consent from the London Borough of Camden. Members were supportive of this approach.

Planning

- Members were advised that there were no new updates concerning planning applications and Officers were continuing to follow up on determinations.
- The Superintendent informed that a planning consultant had been appointed to assist with the large number of planning applications coming through.

- A Member noted that violence and ASB had been reported across a number of Open Spaces and enquired if this had been an issue for staff. Members were informed that there had been some incidents, predominantly large gatherings of young people, but the new Government guidance limiting gatherings to six people would provide clarity to and assist staff and the constabulary. The Superintendent highlighted the critical relationship with the MET Police who had continued to provide enforcement support.
- In response to a query concerning Zippos Circus, Officers confirmed that the upcoming event was able to proceed as the company had worked extensively with officials and City Corporation Officers to ensure performances could take place safely.

RESOLVED – That:-

- Members agree the preferred long-term option for waste and recycling as set out in para 10;
- Members agree the policy position on Cycling, as outlined in paragraph 14;
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to extend the leases for the Parliament Hill Fields café and Parliament Hill Fields Lido café for 12 months to 12 January 2022 as set out in paragraph 24;
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to proceed with tendering the leases for the Queen's Park and Highgate Wood cafés as set out in paragraph 25;
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to proceed with tendering the lease for the Golders Hill Park café as set out in paragraph 30;
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to establish a small temporary Working Group to progress Forest School Licenses and Fitness Training Licenses, as outlined in paragraphs 56 & 57;
- Members agree the preferred option (option 1) for the Lido Wall, as outlined in paragraph 74.

10. HAMPSTEAD HEATH SWIMMING COVID-19 TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS - WINTER SWIMMING SEASON

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces setting out the COVID-19 temporary Winter Swimming Season arrangements, updating on the actions taken to implement the outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020 plus an overall 2020 summer swimming season update. The following comments were made:

- The Chair stated that reopening the three swimming ponds and Lido in line with Government guidance had been incredibly challenging.
- The Chair apologised for the late additional documents but felt that it was important for Members to appreciate the large amount of correspondence received from swimmers. A document summarising the feedback/representations from members of the public regarding issues relating to swimming charging, data, concessions, support scheme was circulated along with initial feedback from the Hampstead Heath Swimming Questionnaire. The Chair confirmed that the results to the review of the summer swim season, including costs and revenue, would follow at the next meeting to provide a full picture. A full end of year swim review would also take place and be reported back to the Committee.
- The Superintendent advised that Officers were preparing for the winter season starting 21 September which would include the parallel introduction of season tickets and contactless payment at each facility. Cash would also continue to be accepted and the helpline would remain available to assist the public. It was noted that Lifeguards would remain at the Mixed Pond during the late warm months.
- The Superintendent highlighted commentary concerning the support scheme available and the package on concessions available at the swimming facilities. The scheme offering free swimming for under 16s/over 60s at 7-9.30am had been very successful at the Lido and Officers were keen to explore this offer at the Ponds. It was noted that the timings did not align with free travel.
- With regards to comments concerning prescribed swimming for health, the City Corporation has aligned with relevant groups, partnerships and Local Authorities and is working on campaigns on physical activity at the Heath.
- The Superintendent noted an existing City Corporation scheme offering time credits for volunteering and was hoping to include season tickets within this offer.
- The Chair advised that bids concerning swimming made through the CWP had been delayed but hoped they would be successful.
- An equity test of relevance was carried out and aligned with the Option 3 decision made by this Committee during the Swim Review.
- Season tickets were frozen and extended for the period of lockdown.
- The Chair highlighted that unlike other swimming venues, the City Corporation had not put their prices up despite the significant loss of income due to the pandemic.

- A Member, whilst supportive of the new swim charges for the safety and future sustainability of the facilities, highlighted the importance of diversity. The Member was concerned by the lack of BAME/cultural use of the facilities reflected in the stats and question how this could be improved.
- Members were advised that the City Corporation had reached out to a number of groups including migrant youth groups which had some success. It was agreed more needed to be done to engage with wider groups and communities.
- Members agreed that accessibility and affordability for all was key and recommended that the support scheme continue to be reviewed. The Superintendent advised that concessions were currently being reviewed across all City Corporation Open Spaces. Fees and charges would also be reviewed as part of the annual review of all costs.
- A Member was concerned that the support scheme did not go far enough to help those on a lower income and should include all individuals on benefits including Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The Chair stated that it was difficult to help everyone as benefits were based on means testing but the scheme aimed to assist these groups.
- Members felt there was a clear position for a campaign/marketing to attract more diverse visitors. It was agreed that cost was not the only issue and some groups may not know these facilities were available.
- A Member suggested approaching City Bridge Trust for possible funding for engagement with wider groups and communities. – was this funding for engagement or to help diverse groups with the cost of swimming?

RESOLVED – That:-

- Members agree the Support Scheme arrangements as outlined in paragraphs 30-40;
- Members agree for the Chair and Deputy Chairman to have delegated authority to agree changes to the Winter Season Proposals in response to further Government Guidance.

11. HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK RISK MANAGEMENT

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces providing an update on the management of risks undertaken by the Open Spaces Department and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Division.

Members were advised that risks were reviewed regularly by the Department's Senior Leadership Team as part of the ongoing management of the operations of the Department and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Team. There were currently seven risks were reported amber.

RESOLVED – That Members note and approve the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Risk Register (Appendix 2).

12. FINANCE UPDATE

Members received oral finance update from the Chamberlain and Director of Open Spaces.

The Chair, as expressed previously, was keen for the Committee to explore revenue raising opportunities. Since the last meeting, an open spaces mid-year review had progressed with a report going to the upcoming Resource Allocations Sub Committee meeting. As the report was not ready for this meeting and the Committee's November meeting would be too late for their input before a final decision was made, the Chair considered an extra meeting looking at rebudgeting proposals and impacts to be necessary.

The Director of Open Spaces advised that monitoring of the in year financial position was happening across all open spaces. Some steps had already taken place to overcome the significant loss of income in the first quarter and the Team continued to improve income generation and find efficiencies to manage properties.

The Superintendent stated that the Heath's outline figures for the current year were forecast at £6m with income estimated at £4.6m and an overspend of £123k. Significant costs were incurred dealing with rubbish and recycling, external security at the swim facilities and making the site Covid secure including additional signage. The cancelling/postponement of events was also a significant loss.

The expenditure at Highgate Wood and Queen's was estimated at £1m with an income of £152k leaving a small overspend but it was hoped this would balance by year end. It was noted that the licences for Forest Schools at Highgate Wood had not yet resumed.

13. OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members received a report of the Director of Open Spaces providing Members with a review of the Open Spaces Department's delivery of its 2019/20 Business Plan.

RECEIVED.

14. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
There were no urgent items.
16. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
RESOLVED, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.
17. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2020 were approved as a correct record subject to one typo.
18. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There were no questions.
19. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There was one item.

The meeting ended at 6.02 pm

Chairman

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