

HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, 15 January 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held at
COMMITTEE ROOMS, 2ND FLOOR, WEST WING, GUILDHALL on Monday, 15
January 2024 at 5.30 pm

Present

Members:

William Upton KC (Chairman)
John Arnoldi
John Foley
Colin Gregory
Michael Hammerson
Michelle Martin
Helen Payne
Richard Summary
David Walton
Jeff Waage

Officers:

Emily Brennan	- Natural Environment Director
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Charlotte Williams	- Environment Department
Paul Maskell	- Environment Department
Jonathan Meares	- Environment Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ray Booth and Liz Andrew.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to a request from Rachel Chapman, Chair of the Trustees of Heath Hands, that John Arnoldi act as Heath Hands representative on the Committee moving forward.

John Arnoldi introduced himself, provided information on his background as a volunteer and Trustee at Heath Hands over the last five years confirming that he was very happy to commit to a role working on the Committee, with Members endorsing the appointment. The Chairman welcomed Mr Arnoldi to the Committee adding how his appointment would also need the endorsement of Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee

- a) The minutes of Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held on 30 October 2023

Reference was made to the Assistant Director's update and the World Cross Country Championships. The date of the event should be January 20th, with it being further clarified that it was the 'trials of the International Cross Country Championships' and not the 'World Cross Country Championships' itself.

It was further noted that it should read 'Conker' festival and not 'Conquer' Festival.

A Member referred a point that 'Members expressed interest in understanding the areas of over 'overspending' but suggested this should in fact read 'underspending', with this point relating to money that could not be spent owing to vacancies that were to be filled.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting on 30 October 2023 be approved, subject to inclusion of the amendments as detailed.

- b) The draft minutes of Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee held on 29 November 2023 were noted.

Matters Arising

Operational Finance Progress Report

A Member remarked on the reference to 'an underspend of £468,000' in the current financial year with this appearing a significant sum, and it was questioned whether the Assistant Director could provide an update on how this was going to be responded to. It was agreed that the Assistant Director would respond to this point during his update at item 5.

Natural Environment Board Strategy

A Member commented on the Natural Environment Board Strategy having been referenced in both sets of minutes presented today. The strategy included nature conservation, community engagement, access and recreation, culture heritage and learning which were all issues this committee were involved in. It was further noted that the Strategy appeared to be going forward to Natural Environment Board for approval before its dissemination for engagement and consultation with this committee.

The Director clarified that a high-level vision mission had been developed with four strategies based on four priorities that were already in development and which had gone to Natural Environment Board for approval as the governing body, with a launch due at the end of this month. It was further clarified that the strategies were high-level, with the different strands at an operational level being picked up through Business Plans and each area working with their respective Consultative Committees on how to implement those strategies in each area. This would provide an opportunity to provide input as necessary. It was further clarified that there would be an opportunity to review how the strategies aligned to management in each area and to engage relevant stakeholders at an appropriate point when there would be an opportunity to feed in.

A Member noted that a strategy was being reviewed for the Heath with contributions welcomed, adding how this was done from the bottom up and it was suggested that the Natural Environment Board Strategy would have benefited from following the same approach to allow Consultative and Management Committees to feed into what was being formulated.

There was a brief discussion regarding the number of meetings in a year and sequencing of this during the year, noting that this continued to be reviewed.

4. **HEATH HANDS UPDATE - DECEMBER 2023**

The committee received an update relating to Heath Hands activity programmes and participants involved in these.

The Heath Hands representative highlighted a number of key points, including the number of ongoing successful events, a positive number of responses and feedback received to a survey of the volunteering community on the value of sessions that were being delivered. Corporate volunteering had seen significant development over the past three years in response to companies wanting to get their employees involved in volunteering work. All Members were invited to visit the Dairy Interpretation Centre with there already having been two and half thousand visitors since it opened in May.

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At this point in the meeting, Michelle Martin from Vale of Health Society, joined the meeting confirming that she would be taking over as Health of Vale's representative on the Committee moving forward. The Chairman noted this and reminded the Committee of a need to confirm and seek endorsement of appointments from Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

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During the discussion a number of points were raised as follows: -

- There was an acknowledgement that Local Authorities were relying increasingly on volunteering to support its park management.
- Heath Hands has a role acting as a key link between the City Corporation and English Heritage.
- More joined up thinking was needed in working together. It was important to be in sync with any agreement; needing to be clear on areas of interaction and overlap.
- Heath Hands was undertaking some very interesting work in terms of increasing diversity of users to the Heath.
- In partnership, it would be good to see more in a land management role and also in an educational role given there were real synergies in these areas; taking the opportunity to think more creatively.
- There was an opportunity to engage with communities that were relatively hard to reach, with a focus on young people and introducing greater diversity.

- Developing links with schools further, particularly at secondary level may be a way in which to engage helpfully with young people.
- It was proposed arranging walks on the Heath for general members of the public to explain how it was managed and allow an understanding of its complexity.

In response, the Heath Hands representative remarked on how he appreciated all the input, noting these were areas that were already being considered or would certainly benefit from further consideration. Engaging with schools around the Heath was already taking place, with a key challenge to widen this engagement and increase diversity.

In conclusion, thanks and congratulations were conveyed to Heath Hands for all their work, engaging with the community to the benefit of both the Heath and to the community. There was agreement on a need to continue working in partnership for the benefit of the Heath.

RESOLVED – That, the update be noted.

5. **ASSISTANT DIRECTORS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director Environment providing Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Health Consultative Committee meeting on 30 October 2023.

A Member conveyed their thanks to the City Corporation for what had been achieved with the athletics track refurbishment, the speed with which the whole project had gone through and with the track now being well used by people.

A Member noted a proposal to relocate the cricket nets and questioned the reasons and options, to which the Assistant Director responded confirming that, subject to capacity at an officer level, the intention was to dual track raising the necessary funding for the project with seeking planning permission to compress the project schedule overall. Relocation of nets from one area of the Heath to another, a quote has been provided and with there being a review of funding available and the main reason for its relocation being the current location being close to pathways used by dog walkers and this presenting a safety issue for other users of the site.

The Chairman referred to a soft opening of the athletics track with Highgate Harriers keen to get back on track and start training for the new season. The project was now in the final stages through an administrative process of final sign off and obtaining certificates before the project reaches its conclusion. The intention remains to hold a grand opening of the athletics track at the beginning of the athletics season and allow an opportunity to celebrate it.

Members noted that the Heath Extension Playground project had now been completed and with the playground now ready to be used. The Chairman conveyed his thanks to all involved for their efforts in sprucing everything up and for the donations that had made it all possible.

The Assistant Director took the opportunity to thank Heath Hands, with the new partnership agreement that was continuing to be worked on being a reflection of the evolving and beneficial partnership working with the City Corporation. Reference was made to the funding campaigns to fund particular projects on the Heath and taking the opportunity to rethink, reprioritise and looking at the potential to relaunch these where appropriate.

The value of any campaign to raise money on the Heath was questioned owing to a lack of resonance with the public. As such, any fund raising would need to be specific and focussed on one or two campaigns at any one time. Clear effective communications would be needed around any campaign; clearly setting out the City Corporation's role and why charity and fundraising was required.

In response to a question, Members received an update on tree health following the recent storm and also in dealing with tree diseases. It was further noted that as part of the Climate Action Strategy, work remained ongoing looking at the resilience of the Heath and looking to ensure ongoing tree health.

A Member remarked on the budget underspend previously reported and requested an update, to which the Assistant Director responded confirming the financial position had now changed since the previous period of reporting and with an underspend no longer expected which was a reflection of the ongoing commitment to investing in the Heath.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

6. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSTABULARY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report the Executive Director, Environment providing the Committee with an update on the Hampstead Heath Constabulary ("the Constabulary") operations since the previous report on 30th October 2023.

During discussion that followed reference was made to a need for the Constabulary to operate in a 'visible manner', but with the current size of the Constabulary it was not considered possible to offer an effective visible presence, with the position needing to be reviewed. It was important for people to feel safe on the Heath, with there being a need to provide re-assurance through visibility and with concerns raised that this would not be possible with the numbers as they were. Members referred to the minutes of the previous Management Committee, and did not agree with the observation that there were concerns or confusion regarding the constabulary's uniforms and their role. A member commented that the potential reputational risk for the Corporation was the other way round, with the risk being if it did not do this role.

The importance of tracking and observing trends was highlighted, with further thought needed on how information can be presented to help with Members' consideration of key areas to focus and prioritise moving forward. A Member noted reference to a Sexual Activity Working Group, all the good work it previously did and whether it could be revived. Concern was raised regarding drug use and considering automatically involving the Metropolitan Police in

dealing with drug dealing on the Heath, which it was confirmed happened already. It was suggested that relevant Managers attend committee meetings moving forward.

In response, Members noted that a new digital platform was being explored that could hopefully support trend analysis moving forward, with the Sexual Activity Working Group being actively looked at with the suggestion for its reinstatement having come from other community stakeholders also. There was agreement on sourcing relevant information from Managers and providing this for the Committee's review, either by way of a reporting or in person attendance; this would be taken away to consider further.

RESOLVED – That, the report be noted.

7. **CURRENT STRUCTURE OF NORTH LONDON OPEN SPACES**

The Committee received a report providing Members with an update on the current structure of North London Open Spaces, the sub-division of the City of London Corporation that oversees Hampstead Heath.

The Natural Environment Director provided Members with background to the rationale and vision for the new structure and its current position.

During the discussion that followed the following points were raised.

- It was questioned how much the new Target Operating Model was led by a desire to have a different shape to the department as opposed to budget changes. In response, it was clarified that there were two strands, through aligning to a rebranding as Natural Environment Division and also through looking to addressing budgetary pressures; with a requirement across the City Corporation to focus on achieving efficiencies, savings or income generation. It was further clarified that the focus was very much on working through the structure that was now in place.
- The rationale for changes to the structure had not been explained; it would be helpful to understand why the division had been made and what advantages these changes were bringing. Huge synergies had been created from establishing one division; there was now a need to focus on what was being delivered on the ground focusing on areas of improvement. Focussing on existing operations and ensure these were work effectively with this Committee having an important role in providing feedback.
- Natural Environment vision, mission and strategies were due to be published in advance of Natural Environment Board dinner in January with the next step being to work with various committees to review management and business plans to make sure there was a golden thread running all the way through these and aligning to strategic priorities for the division.
- A Member highlighted a need for the Committee to be involved at a strategic level to ensure the Heath was being factored in when new strategies were being developed where it would have a key role e.g., Sports Strategy.

The Chairman and Members took the opportunity to thank Jonathan Meares for all his work as Acting Superintendent.

8. **REVIEW OF THE 2023 EVENTS PROGRAMME & PROVISIONAL EVENTS PLANNED FOR THE 2024 PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director Environment, detailing the last year's events programme and detailing the provisional 2024 events schedule.

The importance of the Events Policy was stressed, which offered a level of reassurance that events were not only about monetisation. The King's Coronation Event was highlighted as a key partnership event that allowed for a very special day through the impressive work of staff, users who could enjoy the day and all the work of partners in delivering a great day.

Members noted that the Christmas fayre was not very well attended owing to weather conditions at the time, but that it would be coming back for a third year to complete the contract for the event. International Cross-Country Championships would be a great event with word class athletes for Members to come along and watch.

RESOLVED: That Members: -

- Approved the large and major events proposed as part of the provisional 2024 Events Programme for Hampstead Heath.

9. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Chairman raised the following two items of business:

Martin Russell Deputy Lieutenant London Borough of Barnet – Awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List partly in recognition of his work on events such as the Coronation and all his work in London Borough of Barnet. The Chairman extended the Committee's congratulations for what was a very well-deserved honour for Martin Russell does.

Memorial for Declan Gallagher – The Chairman questioned what might be an appropriate memorial and confirmed something would be put in writing and circulated for Members' consideration and feedback. It would be hoped to have something ready by 30th April, which would be an anniversary date, but with it being more important to get it right. Looking at something around the bandstand, something around the wall garden, possibly a bench. These were ideas that have emerged. The Chairman added how he would welcome input from Members of the Committee and for them to feed in their thoughts.

Members raised an item:

Christmas Trees – Members asked why Christmas Trees were not collected this year. Most years in the past, Christmas trees had been collected at particular points on the Heath by the Corporation. It was a service found useful by the community and it was asked that this should be looked at again. A Member referred to a lot of fly tipping of these trees in the area. In response, the Assistant Director confirmed that the Environment Department were in regular communication with colleagues at London Borough of Camden on a range of areas including tree removal through their contractor Veolia. The City Corporation did not provide the service this year as its chipper was down. This was communicated to the London Borough of Camden months in advance, so it would not have been a surprise to them. A communications campaign was also run, which obviously did not reach everyone concerned and so this would be taken as a good learning point.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 22 APRIL 2024

The meeting ended 7.50pm

Chairman

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[minutes prepared by **Chris Rumbles, City of London**]