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| Committee(s): | | Date(s): |
| Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee | For Discussion | 7 April 2014 |
| Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee | For Decision | 14 April 2014 |
| Subject: | | Public |
| Update on Hampstead Heath – Public Sex Environment Outreach Work - 2013 | | |
| Report of: | | For Decision |
| Superintendent of Hampstead Heath | | |
| Summary | | |
| <p>This report provides an update on the continuing partnership work undertaken by the City of London, Hampstead Heath Constabulary and Terrence Higgins Trust during 2013 in providing Public Sex Environment outreach sessions on the West Heath, Hampstead Heath.</p> | | |
| Recommendation(s) | | |
| <p>That the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes the contents of this report and the continued partnership work carried out by the Hampstead Heath Constabulary, Terrence Higgins Trust and other stakeholders and agencies in promoting responsible use of Hampstead Heath and their safety during 2013. • Approves the continuation of this partnership work during 2014. | | |

Main Report

Background

1. West Heath has a history of being a popular Public Sex Environment (PSE), it is known locally, nationally and internationally as an area where sexual activity takes place, publicised through various media including the internet.
2. There are a number of issues associated with the PSE, including homophobic crime, sexual offences, offences against public decency and propriety, and littering including sexual detritus.
3. In 2002, Hampstead Heath Managers set up a Sexual Activity Working Group (SAWG), working in partnership with key stakeholders. These partners included the Metropolitan Police (MPS), Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), Camden Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Forum, members from

the local community including the Heath & Hampstead Society, and the City of London Corporation. The success of this Group has been to provide a forum to raise awareness of the impact of PSEs between different parts of the community, and to seek positive action to resolve conflict, including the problem of general waste and sexual detritus. Since its inception, the Group has advanced a number of initiatives to address the increasing concern about sexual activity and litter on Hampstead Heath in the areas used as PSEs.

4. In 2011, Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) representatives met with City of London Officers to discuss issues around the disposal of sex litter by Heath users frequenting the PSE West Heath area. Patrols in previous years had focused on encouraging users to report crime but had failed to deal effectively with the concerns of local residents and Heath users about the detritus arising from the use of the PSE, especially for sexual activity. THT was also keen to strengthen its relationship with the Hampstead Heath Constabulary (HHC).
5. The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath agreed to fund THT outreach sessions on the West Heath for a three year period (2011 – 2013), with a review at the end of each year.
6. On 28th January 2013, the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee resolved that the City of London would continue to support the partnership during 2013.
7. The message that both the City of London and THT wanted to deliver was for users to dispose of their litter responsibly, stay safe, and to report crime. With funding from the City of London, THT produced wallet cards with the central message of "Bin It" outlining their key deliverables.
8. In 2012 and 2013, the outreach period was extended to run from April to October, having previously run from May to September, and agreed the programme would include up to three organised Litter Pick Events involving volunteers from THT. The recommendations at the end of 2011 and 2012 focused around the need to continue this successful partnership, which was attracting local support, positive media coverage and also having a beneficial impact on the quantities of general waste and sexual detritus left by PSE users. It was also noted that the PSE users themselves welcomed the partnership and much of the feedback from them centred around feeling safe while visiting Hampstead Heath and the PSE.
9. The outreach sessions allow the HHC, THT and other stakeholders to deliver advice to PSE users, including increased knowledge of how to report a crime either as a victim or witness, having a better understanding about showing respect to other PSE users, and also increasing their awareness of how to look after their own sexual health.

Aims and objectives

10. The aims and objectives of the outreach work were to reduce sex littering on the West Heath, using a model of practice that adopted a holistic, user-centred approach. Although this model of practice has not been standardised, the basic themes appears to be greatly echoed through the majority of multi-disciplinary, multi-agency workers involved in PSEs in London. There were

three main thematic remits to this work, based on previous outreach experience on the Heath and verbal commentary and feedback from the users of what provision they would like to receive:

- Promotion of the “Bin It” campaign.
- Encouraging the reporting of crime – experienced, as well as witnessed.
- Encouraging safer sexual behavioural activity.

11. The Hampstead Heath Management Plan ‘Towards a Plan for the Heath 2007 – 2017’ states:

Informal Public Use – Sexual Activity

7.6.16 No activity of a sexual nature will be tolerated on the Heath where it could cause public offence.

Overriding Objective

Recognise that the Heath’s main users are those who come for informal activity and manage informal recreational activities to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practical, they do not adversely affect others’ enjoyment of or the natural aspect of the Heath.

Essential Action

P9 - Work with members of the community, the Sexual Activity Working Group, the Metropolitan Police Service and others to reduce conflict between Heath users.

Current Position

12. During 2013, the City of London continued to work in partnership with the THT, following the decision made by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Management Committee. The outreach sessions were supported by volunteers and sessional workers from THT, co-patrolling the West Heath with Constables from the HHC. The method of approach used by THT staff was an initial introduction to PSE users and to explain the “Bin It” campaign, encouraging users to take their general waste and sexual detritus home with them or to find a bin and dispose of their litter responsibly. The PSE users were offered male condoms and lube in order to encourage the safe sex messages that THT promotes and information about how to report crime. They were also offered a small bag in which to dispose of their waste.
13. The continuity of having the same faces patrolling the West Heath, delivering the key “Bin it” message, meant that users were more willing to trust the service and more able to advise on and report anti-social behaviour. This latter point proved particularly important with MSM, who often did not access services due to the fear of being 'outed' because of their sexual activities.
14. The HHC continues to have a constable who is a dedicated Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Liaison Officer. This Constable is the

designated point of contact for education, enforcement, guidance and outreach operations on the Heath. The presence and availability of the Constable continues to support the overall running of the outreach sessions through forward planning and improving the safety risk assessments for THT workers and the Constabulary, effectively formalising the relationship between the two partners.

15. The HHC LGBT Liaison Officer and the Constables recorded 154 formal patrols on the West Heath during 2013. During these patrols, the Constabulary dealt with 65 byelaw offences, 48 of these related to sexual activity, 5 for damage, while fires accounted for 4 and 8 were other byelaw offences. No offences were dealt with by summons. These patrols were carried out as part of the ongoing outreach project to reduce the impact of litter. In addition to these designated patrols of the West Heath, the HHC carries out daily patrols of this area as part of their normal patrol objective.
16. While on patrol, outreach workers have access to a Hampstead Heath radio, allowing them to communicate directly with the HHC at all times. Having the support of the Constables has resulted in a sense of reassurance and safety for the THT sessional workers and volunteers and wherever possible, a designated officer has been able to stay with THT for the whole patrol. This maintains safety and ensures workers have the local knowledge of the area to guide them into the main areas of the PSE. This has also allowed the HHC to engage with users, educate them, and if necessary enforce byelaws and criminal law that apply to the area. The aim has been to make the Constabulary more accessible to a diverse group of people who have a history of ambiguity towards the Police and its working partners.
17. In April 2013, the Constabulary LGBT Liaison Officer received information from a PSE user about robbery offences that had taken place on the West Heath. Following these robberies and the arrest of a known suspect, the content of an email was communicated in April 2013 to the HHC by one of the Constabulary Sergeants.

'With reference to the incident yesterday on West Heath PSE, I would like to bring to your attention the positive interactions we had with a number of the PSE users who were keen to speak to us and give us information which has now led to the arrest of a suspect'. (email dated 19/04/13).

18. In addition to the outreach sessions, in February 2013 the Heath joined the Camden LGBT Advice and Safety Project (CLASP) scheme. CLASP is a scheme promoted to showcase Camden as a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)-friendly borough to the visitors of World Pride, which London hosted in June 2012. As a member of CLASP the City of London benefits from signposting the organisation, as well as guidance on how to welcome and assist LGBT visitors to the London Borough of Camden and Hampstead Heath. Whilst the number of incidents is small, there are areas in the Borough of Camden where LGBT people suffer verbal and occasionally physical abuse. The CLASP scheme has been developed by partnering organisations to help provide a safe and welcoming space that will also help organisations to welcome visitors. As a CLASP member, the HHC has a sticker displayed in their vehicle windows that advertises it as LGBT-friendly.



Figure 1: CLASP Badge

Feedback - Outreach Sessions

19. Feedback from a THT Outreach worker:

'The West Heath has a large diverse gay community who frequent the area as a PSE. I have found all PSE users to be friendly and very welcoming to the outreach team and the majority of them are happy to engage with us and hear about our "Bin-It" campaign. There is a diverse range of services users who visit the West Heath, from local residents to tourists who are visiting the area whilst on holiday. The age range of users is from 19 to 70 years. One elderly service user said he uses the Heath weekly to sit and enjoy the views. He enjoys chatting with other guys using the PSE.

I've met two transsexual females that are using the Heath to meet gay men.[One told me} she uses the Heath weekly and felt it's safe for her here, and never had any problems whilst on the Heath.

Hampstead is very busy with most service users knowing each other by name. We see regular faces weekly but there are always service users that are new to the Heath.

Most users are aware of the "Bin it" campaign. I've had a couple of users ask for more bins that could be seen at night'.

20. Temporary bins were trialled in the West Heath during 2012 and 2013. Unfortunately these bins were vandalised and a decision was made not to redeploy them until a suitable alternative could be considered and deployed in 2014. A clear bin bag on a stake, as used in railway stations, has been suggested as an option.
21. Of those users where data was collected, the following information was captured; 244 men classed themselves as gay, 2 as Transsexual, 15 men classed as themselves as men who have sex with men (MSM), 1 male classed himself as straight and 6 men classed themselves as Bisexual.

| PSE Users | |
|---------------|-----|
| White British | 199 |
| Black African | 8 |
| Irish | 9 |
| Asian | 13 |
| Indian | 4 |
| Mixed race | 7 |
| Other | 24 |

Figure 2: PSE Users - Demographics

22. In total 27 outreach sessions were carried out by THT between April and October 2013.

Outcomes

23. PSE users on the whole responded very well to THT interventions. A few (3%) reported negative experiences with previous THT interventions and two were specifically critical of THT Health Promotion campaigns around HIV prevention. Others (12%) were reticent about discussing the use of Hampstead Heath as a PSE in the presence of HHC. Many of these users were reassured upon the explanation that one of the key drivers of the project was to support people in reporting crime, rather than accusing them of being the perpetrators of it. The vast majority (93%) welcomed our presence and the following reasons were most commonly cited.

- Felt safer in the knowledge of the regular presence of HIV/THT/Camden LGBT Forum (51%).
- Faster access to condoms (43%).
- Improved knowledge around sexual health (73%).
- Improved understanding of how to report crime (62%).
- Greater awareness of condom disposal and litter bins (47%)

NB: not all respondents were asked all of these questions.

“Bin It” Campaign

24. PSE users were actively encouraged to dispose of sexual detritus responsibly and understood why it was necessary to do so. There were few adverse responses to this intervention. Assumptions of why the users were on Hampstead Heath were not made and on a number of accounts, other users of the Heath (such as local residents, joggers and dog walkers) had a positive response to the session workers after an initial explanation of the project. Therefore when distributing the “Bin It” card, an emphasis was often initially

placed on reporting crime rather than the disposal of litter. Although almost all users denied dropping sex litter, some did say their issue was with not finding bins and not wanting to take used materials home for hygienic reasons. It was also reported that some users wanted to leave the area of sexuality activity as quickly as possible, once the engagement had come to an end.

‘View from the Heath’

25. The ‘View from the Heath’ column in the November 2013 edition of the Ham & High reported on the outreach work and “Bin it” campaign. This was useful for informing a wider audience of the outreach work carried out by the THT, and promoted a message that all users of the Heath should respect other users.

Litter Pick Events

26. During 2013, organised Litter Pick Events took place on 13th April, 13th July and 12th October, each occurring on a Saturday during daylight hours. Twitter was used to publicise these events. Volunteers from THT came along and assisted with cleaning up the sexual detritus on the West Heath. They were also available to provide interventions with members of the public who were using the area as they would do on a Friday night. The “Bin It” campaign was advertised and many daytime users such as dog walkers gave positive comment on the outreach work on the West Heath. The HHC LGBT Liaison Officer was available on each day to advise users on the City of London’s response to the activity and how the area is policed during the day. These events were also attended by the Camden LGBT Forum, which conducts monthly outreach sessions on the Heath to encourage users to report homophobic crime.



Figure 3: THT Volunteers at a Litter Pick Event

27. As a result of this initiative on the West Heath, THT was approached by the Metropolitan Police to carry out a similar project on Clapham Common. The HHC LGBT Liaison Officer was asked to assist with this project, offering advice and guidance based on the success of the Hampstead Heath Project.

Reporting Crime

28. Overall, attitudes towards the presence of HHC and THT were positive, as users of the PSE have come to trust their presence on Hampstead Heath, having seen outreach sessions taking place for several years. Whilst some commented that they felt safer knowing we were there, others recalled adverse attitudes from the police in the past. As in previous years, there appeared to be an undeniable significance of users reporting that they had historically witnessed crime being committed on other users of the Heath, rather than directly experiencing it themselves. Our interventions found that the main barriers for many users not reporting were;
 - Poor awareness of legal stance on PSEs (27%).
 - ‘Outing’ behaviour conducted on the Heath to the public (19%).
 - Historical experiences of adverse police attitude and behaviour (9%).

Recommendations and Proposals for 2014

29. The continuation in 2014 of the partnership between THT and the City of London in maintaining a safe Open Space, accessible to all through outreach interventions.
30. To continue to develop relationships with Hampstead Heath users and stakeholders, delivering a message of commitment to maintaining a high quality Open Space.
31. The continuity of approach by the City of London, utilising HHC and a dedicated Constabulary LGBT Liaison Officer who can assist in the co-ordination and delivery of the “Bin It” message as part of the outreach work, with the support of the THT outreach workers to build consistency.
32. The THT “Bin It” message should continue to be delivered to users, reducing impact to the environmental by littering and waste.
33. The “clean up’ Litter Pick Events should also be scheduled for spring, summer and autumn 2014 to promote the work that is being carried out by THT volunteers, the City of London, the HHC, and Camden LGBT Forum.
34. Educational messages to PSE users could be strengthened, especially around the environmental impact of not disposing of litter and waste responsibly.
35. Engage with PSE users who express an interest in having more involvement in looking after Hampstead Heath, including conservation and maintenance work through volunteering opportunities.
36. Extending the work to other areas of the Heath where there is an identified PSE, with an opportunity to promote areas to all users for their enjoyment.

37. Providing diversity training to other Hampstead Heath staff, HHC, and other City of London staff (a training session has been scheduled for April 2014).

Corporate and Strategic Implications

38. This partnership approach meets with The City Together Strategy themes of “protecting, promoting and enhancing our environment and [ensuring it] is safer and stronger”. It links to the Department’s Improvement Plan objective of achieving high quality and accessible Open Spaces and involving communities in the care and management of our sites.
39. The outreach work meets with the Departmental Strategic Aim for Inclusion – *‘Involve communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites’* and Quality – *‘To provide safe, secure and accessible Open Spaces and services for the benefit of London and the Nation’*.
40. Two of the three strategic aims in the City of London’s Corporate Plan also apply to the outreach work, namely:
 - Provide modern, efficient and high quality local services and policing within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors, with a view to delivering sustainable outcomes.
 - Provide valued services to London and the nation.

Implications

41. The Division currently employs two members of staff to work on the West Heath, whose primary function is to keep the area clean. There are further financial implications, which would be met from the Hampstead Heath Local Risk Budget. The costs for THT to produce informative material for handing out, undertaking outreach works and delivering diversity training is £6,000.
42. The City of London has byelaws for its Open Spaces that are relevant to the issues of managing a PSE. The byelaws for Hampstead Heath prohibit any nuisance contrary to public decency or propriety, or designedly doing any act that outrages public decency. A person in breach of any byelaw is liable to a fine. The byelaws at Hampstead Heath are enforced by HHC Constables.
43. PSEs have no legal designation. People that use them do not automatically commit a criminal offence by being there. It is an individual’s behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence, dependent on the circumstances and any complaint that may have been made.

Conclusion

44. Litter and waste collection takes up a considerable resource within the Division. The continuation of the outreach work, together with the support from other stakeholders, will continue to deliver the “Bin It” message, along with the City of London providing a safe environment for its visitors.

45. The outreach work has gone from strength to strength. Continuing interest and enthusiasm from THT volunteers and Hampstead Heath constables has ensured the project's successes – receiving positive feedback, visitors feeling safe and reassured, and the Heath being used responsibly.

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