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| Committee(s) | Dated: |
| Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee – For Discussion | 9 March 2015 |
| Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Management Committee – For Decision | 23 March 2015 |
| Subject: Update Report on Hampstead Heath – Public Sex Environment Outreach Work | Public |
| Report of: Superintendent Hampstead Heath | For Decision |

Summary

This report provides an update on the continued partnership work undertaken by the City of London, Hampstead Heath Constabulary and the Terrence Higgins Trust during 2014 to provide outreach sessions on the West Heath Public Sex Environment area of Hampstead Heath.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and the continued partnership work which has been undertaken by the Hampstead Heath Constabulary, Terrence Higgins Trust and other stakeholders and agencies during 2014 to promote the responsible use of Hampstead Heath and users’ safety.
- Support the continuation of partnership work on Hampstead Heath during 2015 by the Hampstead Heath Constabulary, Terrence Higgins Trust and other stakeholders and partners.

Main Report

Background

1. West Heath covers 67 acres, and is located north of West Heath Road and south-east of Golders Hill Park.
2. 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, a fact publicised through various media including the internet. This activity predominantly involves men having sex with other men.
3. There are a number of issues associated with the PSE, including sexual detritus, homophobic crime, sexual offences, offences against public decency and propriety, and littering.

4. In 2002, Hampstead Heath managers set up the Sexual Activity Working Group (SAWG), working in partnership with key stakeholders. These partners include the Metropolitan Police (MPS), Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), Camden Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Forum, members of 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 among various groups of the community of the impact of PSEs on Hampstead Heath, and to pursue positive outcomes to resolve conflicts, including the issue of littering 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 locations used as PSEs.
5. In 2011 officers of the City of London at Hampstead Heath met with Terrence Higgins Trust representatives to discuss issues around the disposal of sex litter by users frequenting the West Heath PSE. Patrols by the Hampstead Heath Constabulary (HHC) and the Camden LGBT 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 litter arising from the use of the PSE, especially sexual detritus. THT was also keen to strengthen its relationship with the City of London and the HHC.
6. 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. Funding for this project came from the Hampstead Heath Local Risk Budget. This original three year project can be broken down as follows; 2011 - £3,582, 2012 - £5,464, 2013 - £6.415. The number of outreach sessions conducted by THT increased from 12 in 2011 to 30 in 2013.
7. The key messages that both the City of London and THT wanted to deliver were for PSE users to dispose of their litter responsibly, stay safe, and report crime. With funding from the City of London, THT produced wallet cards with the central message of “Bin It” outlining these key deliverables. Due to its success, the ‘Bin It’ Campaign has now been used elsewhere in the capital to deliver a similar message.
8. The Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Management Committee meeting of the 14th April 2014 resolved to approve the continuation of the partnership between the City of London and the Terrence Higgins Trust.
9. The outreach sessions allow the HHC, THT and other stakeholders to deliver sound advice to PSE users that includes having a better understanding of behaving responsibly in an Open Space and being respectful of other visitors, including the responsible disposal of litter, a better knowledge of how to report a crime if they were the victim of one (or know someone who was), and increasing their awareness of how to look after their sexual health.

Current Position

10. In and around the West Heath, litter and waste collection is currently carried out by two keeping staff, whose duties include daily patrols of the area to ensure

that it is kept clean, safe and tidy for visitors. Included in their duties is the requirement to collect sexual detritus from the West Heath and to dispose of it appropriately.

11. The keepers keep a record of when they encounter drug paraphernalia. This information is shared with the HHC, allowing Constables to target their patrols effectively.
12. During 2014 Hampstead Heath staff saw an increased number of nitrous oxide gas canisters (also known as laughing gas) being found across the Division. These canisters are used commercially in catering and can also be used to inflate balloons. The recreational use of nitrous oxide dates back hundreds of years, and the possession and inhaling of it is legal. Other items of drug paraphernalia found by staff have included used syringes and small bottles containing Gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB).
13. The approach used by THT staff and volunteers involved an initial introduction to PSE users to explain the 'Bin It' campaign, encouraging users to take their litter home with them, or to find a bin and dispose of their litter responsibly. During 2014 THT continued to hand out male condoms and lubricant, promoting safe sexual activity. West Heath PSE users were also offered a leaflet advising them on how to report crime.
14. When engaging with PSE users, the Outreach Team noted the partnership between the City of London and THT was welcomed. Users felt safer and had an improved understanding about respecting other users and of using the Open Space responsibly.

Aims and Objectives

15. Working in partnership with THT, the City of London has a key aim of reducing the amount of litter, specifically sexual detritus, being left on the ground in the West Heath PSEs, using a model of practice that adopted a holistic, user-centred approach. Although this model of practice has not been standardised, the basic themes appear to be largely echoed through the majority of multi-disciplinary, multi-agency workers involved in PSEs in London.
16. Although a measurement of success is difficult to validate, feedback received from users, staff and members of the Sexual Activity Work Group has been positive. The sessional workers from THT suggested users had an improved understanding of the project and its intentions.
17. During 2014, as part of the contract with THT, thirty outreach sessions took place, mainly on a Friday evening. Some were cancelled due to poor weather conditions and some took place during the week or on a weekend. When resources permitted, the THT sessional workers would link up with the HHC and joint patrols were carried out on the West Heath. The cost to the City of London for these sessions was ££6,038.

18. There were four main thematic remits to this work, based on previous outreach experience on the Heath together with verbal commentary and feedback from the users of what provision they would like to receive. These were:

- Promotion of “Bin-it campaign
- Encouraging responsible use of the Open Space
- Encouraging the reporting of crime - experienced as well as witnessed
- Encouraging safer sexual behavioural activity.

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

Informal Public Use – Sexual Activity: 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.

Outcomes

20. The sessional outreach workers asked for specific data on a number of areas, specifically on reporting crime, being the victim of a crime, condom use, disposal of sex litter, and drug use. Data was captured from 78 users. No data was captured by THT on the total number of interactions by sessional workers during the outreach sessions.

21. On the whole the PSE users responded very well to the sessional worker interactions, although there were some users who were unwilling to engage, who may well be the same group that would benefit most from THT intervention. Some users were reticent about talking about using the Heath as a PSE in the presence of an HHC officer. Many of these were reassured by 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.

22. The vast majority of Heath users welcomed the presence of the THT sessional workers and the HHC, and the following reasons were most commonly cited;

- Greater awareness of condom disposal and litter bins (66%).
- Felt safer in the knowledge of a regular presence of HIV/THT/Camden LGBT Forum there (51%).

- Faster access to condoms (21%).
- Improved knowledge about sexual health (35%).
- Improved understanding of how to report crime (71%).
- Greater understanding of local drugs projects/THT addiction services (44%) – some did not identify this as an issue that needed to be addressed. Some of the more regular PSE users commented that drug use was a problem – and a problem for other users, as it changed the atmosphere of the area.

(Note; not all respondents were asked all these questions).

‘Bin it’ Campaign

23. When engaged with, users on the West Heath were actively encouraged to bin their sex litter, and understood why it was necessary to do so. There were few adverse responses to this intervention. No assumptions were made as to why users were on the Heath. On a number of occasions, other users of the Heath (people out for a walk, joggers and dog walkers) had a very positive response to the sessional workers, after an initial explanation of the project and what they were trying to achieve. When distributing the ‘Bin It’ card, an emphasis was therefore often initially placed on reporting crime, rather than the disposal of sex litter. Although almost all PSE users denied dropping sex litter, some did say that the issue was with not finding bins and not wanting to take used materials home for hygiene 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.

Reporting Crime

24. PSE users have come to trust the presence of the HHC and the THT sessional workers, now that outreach sessions have been taking place on the West Heath for a number of years. Whilst some users commented that they felt safer knowing THT and HHC were there, others recalled adverse attitudes from the Police in the past.

25. As in previous years, there appeared to be an undeniable significance of users reporting that they had historically witnessed criminal offences (e.g. against the person offences, sexual offences or robbery) being committed on other users on the Heath, rather than directly experiencing it themselves. THT interventions found that the main barriers for many users not reporting were:

- Poor awareness of legal stance on PSEs (21%).
- ‘Outing’ behaviour conducted on the Heath to the public (39%).
- Historical experiences of adverse Police attitude and behaviour (4%).

Sexual and Drug Activity

26. Sexual health knowledge, awareness of HIV prevention and transmission were good among PSE users. The sex litter at least gave us reason to believe that safer sex is usually practised. The main emphasis on sexual health was closely related to the reporting crime remit, whereby THT promoted client safety to reduce risk to health from a holistic stance, taking into account physical risk (such as assault) rather than just solely sexual risk (such as sexual violence). Advice was always user-led and ranged from discussion around PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) to issues around injecting crystal meth and legal highs. Although substance abuse issues were acknowledged by some users, there was evidence of drug paraphernalia on the PSE (needles, GBL bottles, small drug bags, pipettes).

Litter Pick Events

27. Clean-up events were supported by THT volunteers and City of London staff. These events were held on the following dates;

- 1 April 2014 – opening event and patrol of Heath with SAWG group.
- 13 June 2014 – Affordable Art Fair - fund-raiser for THT highlighting the PSE work on Hampstead Heath and a litter pick on the West Heath.
- 1 September 2014 – Litter Pick.

28. At the litter pick events, volunteers from THT came along and assisted with cleaning up the sexual detritus in the area. Along with this, they carried out interactions with members of the public that were using the area on a Friday night. The 'Bin It' Campaign was promoted by the volunteers and many daytime users (such as dog walkers) were glad to see that there is positive work going in that area. Volunteers were accompanied by one of the Hampstead Heath Constables, who would give advice to users about the City of London response to how the PSE is policed. These events were also attended by the Camden LGBT Forum, who additionally carry out monthly outreach sessions independently of the THT sessions. Camden LGBT encourages users to report crime.

29. THT delivers similar events and outreach work across London, based on the Hampstead Heath 'Bin It' model.

30. While completing an outreach session in July 2014, sessional workers were advised by three different visitors to Hampstead Heath that a male had been offering unprotected sex in return for drugs (Cannabis and GBL). During a subsequent outreach session, THT came across a sleeping bag and found a 32-year-old male sleeping rough. This was the male that had been identified earlier. THT engaged with the male and provided him with referrals for drug support, and supported him in accessing housing. In addition, a referral was made to 'No Second Night Out', which focuses on helping those who find themselves rough-sleeping on the streets of London for the first time, and for THT Counselling. The

male was also supported in re-engaging with sexual health services and was promptly started on medication.

Options

31. A number of options are available:

- To continue the partnership approach, working with the Terrence Higgins Trust, encouraging responsible use of Hampstead Heath and promoting the 'Bin It' campaign.
- To consider an alternative partner to deliver outreach session on the PSE.
- For the City of London to cease their partnership with THT and manage the PSE outreach work locally.

Recommendations and Proposals

32. It is recommended that the City of London continues its current partnership, working with the Terrence Higgins Trust in 2015 to deliver outreach sessions on the PSEs of Hampstead Heath.

33. It is also recommended to continue to develop relationships with Hampstead Heath users and stakeholders, delivering a message of commitment to maintaining a high-quality Open Space.

34. The Terrence Higgins Trust 'Bin It' campaign message should continue to be delivered to Heath users, thus reducing environmental impact through littering and waste.

35. The "clean-up" litter pick events should continue to be scheduled for spring, summer and autumn 2015, promoting the work that is being carried out by THT, volunteers, the City of London, the HHC and Camden LGBT Forum.

36. Educational messages to PSE users could be strengthened, especially around the environmental impact of not disposing of their litter and waste responsibly.

37. There should also be engagement with PSE users who express an interest in having more involvement in looking after Hampstead Heath, including conservation and maintenance work through volunteering opportunities.

38. There should be monitoring and the provision of more robust information about drug use on the PSE sites, including the types of drugs taken, frequency, support required, and the demographics of users.

39. Diversity training should be provided to other Hampstead Heath staff, the HHC, and other City of London staff.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

40. This partnership approach meets with The City Together (2008 – 2014) Strategy themes of “protecting, promoting and enhancing our environment and ensuring it is safer and stronger”.
41. The outreach work meets with the Departmental Strategic aim; *Widening and developing what we offer to Londoners through education, biodiversity and volunteering.*
42. Two of the three strategic aims in the City Corporation’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

43. The Division currently employs two members of staff (at a cost of £62,864pa) to work in the West Heath, whose primary function is to keep the area clean, although they do have other keeping responsibilities and duties in this area. There are further financial implications, which would be met from the Hampstead Heath Local Risk Budget. In 2014, the costs for THT to produce informative material, undertake outreach work and to deliver diversity training, cost the City of London £6,038.00. Should the City of London continue with the project in 2015, the Constabulary Manager will negotiate a revised programme for just the outreach sessions with the costs not exceeding £5,000.
44. 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, as well as designedly doing any act which outrages public decency. A person in breach of any byelaw is liable to face a fine. The byelaws at Hampstead Heath are enforced by attested Constables from the HHC.
45. PSEs have no legal designation. People that use them do not as a matter of course commit a criminal offence by being there. It is an individual’s behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence, depending on the circumstances and any complaint that may have been made due to their activity or behaviour.
46. Should the City of London fail to manage litter and waste collections on Hampstead Heath, there may be a risk to the organisation’s reputation.
47. Any increase in criminal activity against the persons using the West Heath may have implications on visitor numbers and user perceptions with regard to their safety when using the Open Space.

Conclusion

48. The City of London continues to manage the collection of waste and litter on the West Heath effectively. Two full-time members of staff have the responsibility of maintaining this area, including the collection and disposal of litter and sexual detritus.
49. The West Heath continues to be identified as a PSE and users continue to come to this area to meet with others or engage in sexual activity.
50. The outreach work on the PSE has become embedded in the management of the PSE, and users of the Open Space recognise the positive work that is carried out by the volunteers, THT, the City of London and its staff in their efforts to reduce litter and promote responsible use of the PSE and the Open Space.

Appendices

None

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