

Committee(s)	Dated:
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group – For Discussion Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, Queen's Park Committee – For Decision	21 June 2016 18 July 2016
Subject: Queen's Park – Superintendents Update - June 2016	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Report author: Richard Gentry – Open Spaces Department	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group (QPJCG) in regard to the ongoing management and operational activities in Queen's Park since November 2015. This report gives an update on operational matters, operational working arrangements, income generation, sustainability, conservation, infrastructure and facilities.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.
- Give feedback on the proposed fire work display, to be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on the 18 July 2016.
- That Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee endorse option c) in regard to the proposed firework display in the Park.

Main Report

Background

1. The most recent report to this Committee was November 2015.
2. The café tender was awarded to a local company, Minkies (Surebrooks Limited), who will take over the lease of the café on 1 August 2016.

Proposed changes to working arrangements.

3. Over the last nine months a comprehensive review of operational working arrangements has been carried out across Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park. The purpose of carrying out this review is to identify areas where efficiencies can be made, and to redeploy resources to areas needing support.

4. The proposals will ensure that our staff resources are used effectively and consistent cover is maintained throughout the year, to reflect the needs of the service and maintain the work/life balance for our staff. Savings made as part of the proposals will contribute to Service Based Review Savings.
5. Queen's Park staff were included in a four week informal consultation process, which finished in February 2016. Following a number of meetings with staff and Trade Union Representatives, a Formal Consultation was launched on 7 March and closed on 10 April. It is intended to implement the changes to working arrangements on 1 October 2016. The proposed changes will see an improved rota which is more equitable amongst staff.
6. Queen's Park staff have been informally consulted on a restructure within the Team. Further information is required from the Human Resources Department before the process moves in to formal consultation. It is intended to implement the new structure on 1 October 2016.

Operational Management

7. The Bandstand continues to be hired out for small gatherings. Since January 2016 we have received 26 bookings to make use of the Bandstand. In 2015 there were 34 parties generating £1,870 income.
8. The Children's Farm donation post, installed in March 2015, has raised £2,645 to date. These donations go towards the daily upkeep and maintenance of the farm, including the purchasing of food.
9. The Queen's Park Animal Attendant is currently covering a vacant post at the Golders Hill Park Zoo. Interviews for this post will be taking place in June. The Animal Attendant will continue to work between the two sites after the vacancy has been filled. As part of identified efficiencies, the Animal Attendant will support the Zoo Team Leader in changes at the Golders Hill Park Zoo and at the Queen's Park Children's Farm. Before any changes are considered the City Corporation will consult with its visitors. The Animal Attendant will also support the Open Spaces Learning Team to deliver educational sessions in the farm and park.
10. The City Surveyor's 20 Year Additional Works Programme has enabled a number of pathways to be resurfaced, including the Harvist Road and the Kingswood Avenue park entrances. The two brick holding walls at the entrance to Harvist Road have been replaced with wooden raised beds, and the existing plants have been successfully replanted.
11. The Lych Gate in the Quiet Garden has also had works carried out under the Additional Work Programme. New drainage has been installed along with new brick work and roof tiles. There was evidence of some movement in the building and the structure has been underpinned. Contractors have painted the interior and exterior of the structure. Pigeon deterrent spikes were also installed to prevent them from nesting in the roof area. A broken shutter was removed from the structure.

12. At the northern end of the park the Petanque rink (boulle) has been removed due to underuse, and the wooden sleepers will be used to make steps on Hampstead Heath. The interpretation sign containing the Petanque rules has been transferred to Parliament Hill Fields and will be installed on the Petanque rink. Two items of trim trail equipment will be installed in this area in June. These items match our existing trim trail equipment. The remainder of the area will be returned to grass.
13. The hedge laying that staff carried out in the Woodland Walk last year has been continued and now stretches from the Woodland Walk entrance towards the Bandstand area. With the support and guidance of our Ecologist two members of the Queen's Park Team have been empowered to carry out this task with little supervision.

Visitors and Community

14. There are a number of events taking place in the park this year. 'Where is the Nomad' will have four outdoor screenings this year, these will take place on the 13 and 20 August 2016, and 3 and 24 September 2016. Regents Brass, a local brass band, will play on the Bandstand on Sundays in July and August and children's entertainment has been booked and will take place on Wednesdays and Fridays in August. These events will be published on the website and promoted via social media.
15. This year the RSPB will be holding 'Family Fun' sessions in the park with mini beast safaris and ecological themed sessions for children and their parents. A number of events have already been held with further events taking place throughout the summer. These events are free for members of the public.
16. The Queen's Park Area Residents' Association are holding their bi-annual Open Gardens and Studios event on 19 June 2016. Gazebos will be erected by the volunteers for the artists to showpiece their work in the park. The event will include music on the Bandstand. Queen's Park Day will take place on the 18 September 2016.
17. The Hampstead Heath Constabulary has carried out a number of patrols in Queen's Park to respond to concerns raised in regard to dogs off lead. Constables have issued a small number of formal warnings and feedback has been positive from park users. One email received said "Today while i (sic) was walking my Dogs in the Queens park, NW London I was surprised and very happy to meet a few of your officers from the Hampstead Heath Constabulary in the park".
18. Currently, an online survey is available on the Queen's Park webpage; the Park Manager is seeking the views and opinions of its users on future events in the park. The survey will be promoted further over the summer months and the results will be presented at the next meeting of the Consultative Group in November 2016.

19. An events company, XclusiveTouch Ltd, have approached the City Corporation in regard to a family fireworks display being held in the park on the 5 November 2016. The event company aim to attract 10,000 people to this event, focusing on families attending. They will supply stewards and arrange for the build and strike down of the event. A licence fee for this type of event would generate income for the park. The event company have suggested the following;

- Food stalls, food and chocolate brands / beer tent in the park for the duration of the event
- Fairground rides for the duration of the event
- Set up the fireworks one day in advance (in safe area)
- Fireworks after dusk, one show for smaller children and another for adults / families
- Ticketed event for the fireworks display

20. A local park in Brent, Roundwood Park, has an annual firework display; this firework display is free of charge. There is a charge for fairground rides.

21. Due to the time of year and the possible inclement weather conditions, there are concerns with regard to the impact an event of this type may have on turfed areas of the park.

22. Options to consider are;

- a) Issue a licence for the event to take place on the 5 November 2016, including the food stalls and fairground rides
- b) Permission for a fireworks display only, taking into consideration the damage which may be caused to the ground by a larger event taking place throughout the day in the park
- c) Decline the request for a licence, and await the outcome of feedback from the Event Survey to consider this as a future event (preferred option).

23. The Park's Gardener has hosted 'Meet the Gardener' sessions in the Quiet Garden. The gardener is available to share his horticultural knowledge with the public. These sessions are held on Saturdays and the dates are advertised on posters in the Quiet Garden and via Twitter.

24. A very popular activity with local schools is bulb planting. Over 3,000 bulbs were planted on the bunds located at the southern end of the park. Visitors have commented on the impressive display of Daffodils in the park in the spring.

25. A visitor's satisfaction survey was carried out earlier this year; Queen's Park scored an average 4.6 out of 5. Results of this survey can be found at Appendix 1.

26. Seven requests to film in the Park have been made this year, with four requests being granted (three organisations withdrew their application). These filming requests generated £1,620 income.

27. The park continues to monitor its visitor number by gate counters at each gate. In 2015 the park received 1,082,376 visits; the farm received 122,308 and the children's play area 226,748.
28. The Park Supervisor has registered details on to the Brent Volunteering website <http://www.volunteeringbrent.org.uk/>. A draft volunteering handbook has been produced. The objective is to have agreed projects and regular tasks which will enable the participation of volunteers, e.g. building a bug hotel in the woodland walk, assisting with planting projects or helping in the Children's Farm.

Children's Play Area

29. Planting at the back of the playground has been removed ready to be turfed. Unfortunately this area was not very successful due to the children using it as an area to run through, which caused damage to the plants. Some of the plants that were removed have been replanted in the gardens or potted up for future use.
30. The Park Supervisor is developing a project to make improvements in the sand pit area of the playground. Consultation will take place with our visitors and this will enable the production of a final design. A consultant will provide support with this project, producing a design brief, and assisting with the consultation process.
31. A complaint has been received from a local resident from with regards to the metal edging around the safety surface in the playground. This will be considered as part of the annual safety review of the play equipment by RoSPA. Quotations have been obtained giving consideration to a rubberised compound being used in the play area abutting the metal edged pathways.

Ecology and Environment

32. Queen's Park has a contract with Veolia who remove recycling on a fortnightly basis. Previously this service was free of charge, it now costs the park £760.00 per annum. General waste continues to be removed from Queen's Park by Amey, the City of London Corporation's preferred contractor. Green waste is no longer collected by the London Borough of Brent. The park hires skips to manage the green waste and these are removed by Amey. Costs per skip vary between £360 and £490. After the 2015 Christmas period the London Borough of Brent collected over a thousand Christmas trees from the park.
33. The Kensal to Kilburn Transition Town allotment at the rear of the café continues to be maintained by a small group of volunteers, with an assortment of fruit and vegetables being grown. The Big Dig event was held in April, the group gathered and spent the day tidying the vegetable plot and preparing it by planting various vegetables.

Conservation and Heritage

34. The park has entered in to the 20th year of the Green Flag Award scheme and it hopes that it can achieve its 20th Green Flag Award. The park has also entered in

the London in Bloom scheme. In 2015 the park received a Silver Gilt Award, and staff are striving to achieve a Gold Award in 2016.

35. In regard to actions within the Conservation Management Plan, steady progress is being made with a number of the actions. Examples of these successes include: continuing to engage the local community in the management of the park and decisions about future developments, improving the conditions of the park's structures and buildings, seeking advice and assistance from specialists when appropriate, conserving and enhancing hedgerow habitats and continuing to provide high quality visitor facilities.

Landscape Management

36. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) has been detected in some of the Oak trees in the park. A small number of nests have been removed by a specialist contractor and an area of 50 metres in diameter around the affected tree has been sprayed. The Heath's Arboricultural Team will continue to monitor the Oak trees for any signs of OPM.
37. Massaria is evident in the London Plane trees in the park and branches with the fungus are removed by the Arboricultural Team. Regular inspection visits to the park are carried and the focus is on the removal of branches that overhang pathways.
38. The hedges around the perimeter of the tennis courts, the farm and the yard have been reduced in height. The tennis courts can now be seen from the golf course and the light and airflow that this has created has had a positive effect on weeds such as moss.

Sports and Recreation

39. A project to introduce an online tennis booking application is progressing well. A soft launch is planned for the 24 July 2016 which will include a Great British Tennis Weekend event. This online application is supported by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). The Open Space Department is encouraging sport and physical exercise in its open spaces; one way of achieving this is by encouraging people to play tennis and increasing usage on our tennis courts. To support this approach the City Corporation and the LTA have entered in to a partnership agreement.
40. Early conversations are taking place with the City Surveyor's Department in regard to the refurbishment of the tennis courts under the 20 Year Additional Work Programme. An initial approach has also been made to the LTA in regard to additional funding for this project.
41. A company called Try Tag Rugby who are affiliated to the Rugby Football League have been issued with a licence to use part of the main field for 16 sessions from April until August. The sessions take place on Thursday evenings and a partial rugby pitch is marked out each week. As this is a licensed activity a fee is charged for the use of the main field and the staff time.

42. Group tennis lessons have been organised by the City Corporation throughout the summer, they are for all skill levels from beginners to advanced. The courses have been promoted via the web, social media and promotional banners around the park.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

43. This report will help fulfil the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2015-19; to provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation. The report also meets the Department's Strategic Goals and Objectives; Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites, Embed financial sustainability across our activities by delivering identified programmes and projects, Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing high quality and engaging educational and volunteering opportunities, Improve the health and wellbeing of community through access to green space and recreation. The report also contributes to the Departmental values of quality, inclusion, environment, promotion and people.

Implications

44. The operational requirements highlighted in the report will be met from the Queen's Park Local Risk Budget.

Conclusion

45. This report demonstrates the continued hard work by the Queen's Park staff and the City of London Corporation in maintaining a good quality Open Space.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Queen's Park Satisfaction Survey

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