

HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, 6 July 2020

Minutes of the virtual public meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee on Monday, 6 July 2020 at 5.30 pm. The meeting can be viewed at:
<https://youtu.be/ZGJmVJ796x8>.

Present

Members:

Anne Fairweather (Chair)
Karina Dostalova (Deputy Chairman)
Ray Booth (Barnet Mencap)
Nick Bradfield (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
John Etheridge (South End Green Association)
Mathew Frith (London Wildlife Trust)
Cindy Galvin (Heath Hands)
Colin Gregory (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association)
Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)
Dr Gaye Henson (Marylebone Birdwatching Society)
Helen Payne (Friends of Kenwood)
Thomas Radice (Heath and Hampstead Society)
Susan Rose (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
Steve Ripley (Ramblers' Association)
Ellin Stein (Mansfield Conservation Area Advisory Committee & Neighbourhood Association Committee)
Richard Sumray (London Council for Recreation and Sport)
David Walton (Representative of Clubs using facilities on the Heath)
Simon Williams (Vale of Health Society)

Officers:

Colin BATTERY	- Director of Open Spaces
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Declan Gallagher	- Operational Services Manager
Richard Gentry	- Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Jonathan Meares	- Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager
Paul Maskell	- Leisure and Events Manager
Alison Bunn	- Assistant Director Facilities Management, City Surveyors
Kate Radusin	- PA to Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Yvette Hughes	- Business Manager, Open Spaces Department
Leanne Murphy	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Simon Taylor, John Weston, Harunur Rashid and Sharleen McGee.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

3. **MINUTES**

The public minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2020 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

The Chair noted the request from Members at the last meeting for a legal note on the status of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC). Members were advised that Heath and Hampstead Society sought more time to write directly to the Chair setting out a very specific element of their argument in relation to the role of the HHCC in light of the discussions in Parliament regarding the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018. On receipt of this letter, Officers will engage with the Remembrancer and Director of Open Spaces.

4. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee (HHHWQPC) meeting held on 3 June 2020 were received.

5. **CYCLICAL WORKS PROGRAMME BID 2021/22**

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor setting out a provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Division in 2021/22 under the umbrella of the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP).

The Chair highlighted that the bid was less than in previous years. Members were advised that City's Cash was approximately £6m per year which was used to maintain corporate properties. Projects were scored and funded based on health and safety priority and securities scores. Members were concerned by the significant drop in funding and the impact this would have on scheduled projects. Members were advised that cyclical projects would be maintained and that 2020 was an exceptional year in terms of high priority projects.

A Member (Friends of Kenwood) enquired how the Fundamental Review and the City's commitment to big projects pre Covid-19 would affect the Open Spaces Department. The Director of Open Spaces explained that a full review of the financial position of all departments was taking place to understand the impact of the pandemic. Estimates were being produced with a plan to report in October together with the findings from the Fundamental Review, i.e. sustainable budgets, income generation, etc, to enable the organisation as a whole to re-examine its priorities. Optimising income streams, producing sustainable streams and completing key projects remained a priority for the Department. It was noted that capital projects were separate and would be looked at separately.

A Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) noted that surveys were a concern raised by the HHCC last year and were assured that these would continue. The Member was concerned that there would no longer be enough money to ensure proper surveys continued. The Director informed Members that the Epping Forest & Commons Committee were also concerned

regarding the projects backlog and suggested that a written request come from the Open Spaces Department requesting additional funding to deal with the backlog. This would need to be argued for strongly. A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) felt that more detailed financial information was required first, then evidence could be gathered to support the case for more funding.

In response to queries regarding Covid-19, Members were informed that the CWP funding had been £12m per year for the last three years. The Chair stated that it was too early to know what the wider impacts of Covid-19 were but there were clear missed event opportunities and income from swimming and sports.

RESOLVED – That:-

- Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee note the report and provide feedback on the provisional list of cyclical projects being considered for the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Division in 2021/22;
- The views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee.

6. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Members considered an update report of the Superintendent and the following headlines and comments were made:

- There has been a huge uptake in tennis, with participation up 196% on average across the facilities. There has been a 254% increase at Queen's Park and 150% at Parliament Hill for the period 16 May – 30 June compared to the same period in 2019.
- The Superintendent updated Members on four planning applications:
 - **Ivy House monopole.** The application has been refused on the basis that the monopole and equipment would, by reason of their size, siting and appearance, appear as prominent and visually obtrusive features within the street scene and reduce the effective width of the pavement and would therefore have significant adverse impact on the character and visual amenities of the surrounding area.
 - **Boncara, 35 Templewood.** A planning representation had been made regarding the basement and its impact on a nearby veteran tree.
 - **Jack Straws Castle.** A planning representation was submitted by the City Corporation regarding the impact of massing, traffic and parking.

- **Lido Temporary Fence.** Members were advised that Camden had requested additional information concerning the City Corporation's application for a temporary fence for three months per year for the Lido.
- The Superintendent commended staff and Managers who had been working double shifts and praised the community groups and volunteers who responded to requests for help with issues such as waste and recycling. The Chair endorsed this and welcomed more recruits via Heath Hands whilst emphasising that participants should use gloves and other protective equipment to ensure their safety.
- The car park spaces set aside for the Royal Free at East Heath have now returned to Heath.
- Public toilets and cafés have now re-opened. Playgrounds and outdoor gym equipment will re-open from mid-July. The Hill Garden and Pergola have also re-opened.
- A Member (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee) queried if the City Corporation had any input into the Millfield Lane road restrictions. The Superintendent confirmed the Team had not inputted but the Fitzroy Park Residents Association had liaised with the London Borough of Camden that this be revisited, and Officers were keeping note of developments.
- A Member (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee) felt the Merton Lane scheme was in need of amendment and was in fear of injury to the public. Members were advised that a meeting had been scheduled with the London Borough of Camden next week to discuss this further and the Chair had also been in touch with the responsible Camden Councillor. It was noted that the situation was particularly bad at weekends with cyclists, children and pedestrians all forced into a narrow space.

Waste

- The Superintendent acknowledged that during the recent hot spell the bins had been overwhelmed by the amount of litter left by visitors. Onsite bins would be repositioned nearer to entrances/exits to ensure waste was collected as visitors were leaving. It was noted that if the bins were positioned too close to the perimeters then they would attract street waste. It was also noted that visitors did not like touching the bins and the lids were therefore being left open.
- A Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) questioned if Option 1, which was trialled at the beginning of lockdown, could work. The Superintendent stated that Option 1 was working well on a local level between March and May and visitors were being

compliant. However, this became challenging from 13 May when visitors vastly increased in numbers. The longer-term strategy is to continue with the ethos of community care for the Heath but a full sign up for Option 1 would require additional research and behavioural changes. Officers continue to work with Keep Britain Tidy to develop this strategy.

- It was noted that other London open spaces only provided dog waste bins to encourage visitors to take their rubbish home and a Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) queried if this was a feasible option for the Heath. Officers confirmed that a significantly reduced bin trial would take place during winter which had received local support.
- A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) suggested a flexible approach across the year, e.g. reduce the number of bins in the winter months and increase in the summer when there were significantly more visitors. It was agreed flexibility was needed especially during hot weather.
- In response to concerns expressed regarding nitrous oxide use in the Millfield Lane area, Members were advised that it was not illegal to be in possession but illegal to sell or supply it and Officers and the Constabulary were acting to prevent this behaviour if witnessed.
- The Superintendent agreed to keep Members updated over the summer, noting the need for flexibility during the hot weather peaks. A further iteration of the handling system was expected later in the week with a contractor offering support in the short term.

Cycling

- The Superintendent set out the current position in relation to cycling on the Heath. There are established shared used paths on the Heath and cycle parking is provided at various locations on the periphery of the Heath. This allows visitors to cycle to the Heath before parking their bikes and walking to their final destination. The Town Clerk noted that concerns regarding cycling had been received from a Member (Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee) who strongly opposed any increase in the cycle network on the Heath.
- Members discussed the issues caused by cyclists and the potential danger to pedestrians which had been exacerbated by Covid-19. Members were supportive of the current position and suggested a proactive review of cycling which was timely (rather than waiting until 2024) noting the concerns for pedestrian safety, narrow pavements, trees and diversions causing pollution hot spots in the surrounding areas.
- In response to a query regarding the legal position on electric bikes and scooters, Officers confirmed electric bikes were required to keep to the

max 12mph speed limit and electric scooter use was prohibited on paths as per the by-laws. The Government were considering whether they would be legalised on the highway and Open Spaces Officers would follow this carefully.

- There was particular concern raised over the number of cyclists on Sandy Heath and the impact this activity was having on local ecology. Members felt that the Heath Team had done well in trying to control this, but it remained an ongoing issue. Members were not in favour of additional cycle paths or one-way paths as they had wider implications for boundary areas and would be difficult to remove once introduced. Members also noted comments in the last issue of the Ham and High. Officers agreed to liaise with the Heath and Hampstead Society and work locally with the London Borough of Camden to improve cycle safety on the roads surrounding the Heath.

RESOLVED – That:-

- Members views on the preferred long-term option for waste and recycling are sought;
- Members give feedback on whether the policy position on Cycling, as outlined in paragraph 26 should be reviewed to reflect the urgency represented by Covid-19 in relation to encouraging communities to commute by walking and cycling.

7. HAMPSTEAD HEATH SWIMMING COVID-19 TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces concerning the Hampstead Heath Swimming Covid-19 temporary arrangements and the following comments were made:

- The Superintendent stated that swimming fell under step 3 of the Government's Covid-19 recovery plan and unfortunately there had been a U-turn in plans to reopen sports facilities. Swim England was pressing ahead with its 'Open Our Pools' campaign in an attempt to force a reversal on the Government's decision and were hopeful for an announcement from the Government this week.
- The industry generally had pushed for more information as they would need time to mobilise and Officers were working in anticipation of reopening by implementing social distancing measures which were being adapted for each facility. Two successful trials were undertaken to test the social distancing measures introduced and the cap on the number of swimmers. Officers awaited further Government guidance before undertaking any more tests. Staff have continued to engage with swimmers who require assistance or have access difficulties.
- It was noted that the season ticket scheme had been suspended and would be reinstated as soon as possible.

- The information office at Parliament Hill was now open for visitors and telephone enquiries for those without internet access.
- The Chair commended staff for the huge amount of work that had been achieved and was disappointed that the date had been moved back by the Government. The Chair noted that she had written to the Secretary of State to express disappointment in the decision. There had been no response yet, but the Chair hopeful other swimming organisations would follow suit. Members noted that despite the pro-active work and preparations, the Government guidance was essential.
- A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) noted that staff would need additional support in dealing with some behaviours, particularly in the early stages, and the Heath must be seen to take enforcement action where necessary as a deterrent.
- The Superintendent endorsed this and confirmed that the booking system had been designed to cover weather fluctuations. Signage would be positioned in respect of pre-booking and press releases would further explain the need to book via the new system.
- It was noted that Lifeguards had been stationed at the swimming facilities since March and additional security guards were patrolling the bathing ponds with dogs at night. This had assisted the Constabulary which had been considerably overstretched and the Superintendent confirmed that enforcement would be used for breaches in by-laws and anti-social behaviour.
- The Chair advised that she had repeatedly made a case for flexing the City Corporation's resources to where they were most needed, i.e. the City was very quiet but there had been considerable demands on its various Open Spaces.

RESOLVED – That Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee note the report.

8. **QUESTIONS**

Erosion

A Member (Highgate Society) queried if an increase in erosion had been observed at the Heath akin to erosion at Highgate Woods. The Superintendent confirmed there had been an increase in erosion and compaction on path edges due to visitors socially distancing and works to address the impact, including a full study and plan to rest areas, were covered within the revised Annual Work Programme. The Superintendent confirmed that temporary fencing would be used where necessary to assist with recovery.

Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan

It was agreed that the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan be sent to the Town Clerk and Chair for consideration at the next meeting.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

Members were advised that there were significantly less OPM nests this year with 150 identified in the main area of the Heath, and Heath Hands volunteers were thanked for their assistance in surveying nests. An additional 2-3 weeks of surveying would take place before nest removal would commence. Members noted that the presence of a parasitic fly may have kept the numbers down.

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

There was none.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting on 19 October 2020 was noted.

The meeting ended at 6.56 pm

Chair

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