

HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Monday, 14 October 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held at Parliament Hill Conference Room, Parliament Hill Staff Yard, Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead Heath, NW5 1QR on Monday, 14 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present

Members:

Karina Dostalova (Chairman)
Anne Fairweather (Deputy Chairman)
Ray Booth (Barnet Mencap)
Nick Bradfield (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
John Etheridge (South End Green Association)
Matthew Frith (London Wildlife Trust)
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)
Richard Sumray (London Council for Recreation and Sport)
David Walton (Representative of Clubs using facilities on the Heath)
John Weston (Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
Simon Williams (Vale of Health Society)

In attendance:

Dr Merlin Fox
Jon Sheaff

Officers:

Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Jonathan Meares	- Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager
Declan Gallagher	- Operational Services Manager
Richard Gentry	- Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Paul Maskell	- Leisure and Events Manager
Yvette Hughes	- Business Manager
Kate Radusin	- PA to Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Carl Locsin	- Media Team, Town Clerk's Department
Leanne Murphy	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cindy Galvin (represented by Dr Merlin Fox), Ellin Stein, Harunur Rashid, Simon Taylor and Sharlene McGee.

The Chairman advised Members that Ellen Solomons had stepped down as Vale of Health Society representative and thanked her for her contribution to the Committee. The Chairman welcomed Simon Williams who was the new Vale of Health Society representative.

The Chairman thanked the Heath & Hampstead Society for hosting an enjoyable party on 11 September 2019 celebrating 30 years of the City Corporation's custodianship of the Heath.

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 8 July 2019 were approved as a correct record subject to one typo.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Members noted the various outstanding actions and the update provided thereon.

With regards to action 1, Members were advised that the Superintendent had been liaising with the Head of the Education Commissioning & Schools Organisation for Camden and had set out what was required from a representative for local schools. Discussions included the possibility of the role being undertaken by a Youth Council representative. The Superintendent was awaiting suggestions and feedback from the London Borough of Camden.

5. **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 11 September 2019 were received.

6. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH SPORTS ADVISORY FORUM MINUTES**

The draft public minutes of the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum meeting held on 16 September 2019 were received.

Members were advised that the City of London Corporation's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy was heavily discussed and useful feedback on the Heath was provided. The Forum hoped that they would be given the opportunity to review the new draft of the Strategy before it was finalised.

The Chairman stated that the new draft would be revisiting a number of Committees for feedback before being approved and would first go to the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub Committee (PRED) in November, of which the Chairman and the Deputy Chair were both Members. It was agreed the draft would be circulated to the Forum in advance of the next HHCC meeting in January for comments.

Proposal from the Hampstead and Highgate Angling Society (HAHAS)

Members were advised that a proposal had been received by the HAHAS regarding the reintroduction of angling from the north bank of the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond to allow float fishing only, which presented no danger to swimmers.

The proposal was discussed at the Swimming Forum and during the recent Committee walk. It was noted that the Highgate Men's Pond Association had voted against the proposal at their recent AGM and that the Swimming Forum representatives gave mixed feedback in relation to the proposal.

The Superintendent confirmed that the local swimming community, users and forums would need consultation regarding the proposal. Officers would explore the range of options and issues concerning float fishing, including a possible offer for schools on an arranged basis, extreme weather protocols, consideration of how appropriate float fishing was in a swimming pond and whether other ponds were more appropriate. Members agreed that all options needed to be explored before any decision was made.

In response to a Member (Friends of Kenwood) seeking reassurance that the wildlife would not be affected, the Superintendent confirmed that this work would be captured in the Ponds and Wetland Strategy.

A Member (Highgate Society) queried how the stock of fish in the Men's Pond compared to other ponds. Members were advised that the Men's Pond contained a varied of species of fish.

It was agreed the proposal would be brought back for consideration following further exploration of the options by Officers.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

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

Management Framework

- The Superintendent confirmed that the Management Framework was being updated following feedback from Members and would be circulated for Members consideration at a future meeting.

Awards

- The Superintendent was pleased to advise that Hampstead Heath had retained its Green Flag award and Green Heritage status.

City Surveyors Cyclical Work Programme

- The Superintendent updated Members on current projects within the Cyclical Work Programme including the Heath Extension changing

rooms and public toilets. A planning application for the refurbishment of the Parliament Hill public toilets was out to consultation by the London Borough of Camden.

East Heath Car Park (A DP5)

- The Superintendent confirmed that an application had been made to the City Corporation's Annual Programme for Capital Bids to fund this project and it was hoped the funds would be secured based on public safety grounds. A bid had also been made seeking funding for the Parliament Hill Athletics Track resurfacing project.

Planning

- **North Fairground Site, 2017/4346/P.** It was noted that this Public Inquiry had been postponed until December 2019.
- **South Fairground Site.** The Superintendent advised that the appeal had been dismissed and the Enforcement Notice upheld. The City Corporation will be able to claim for a proportion of the costs accrued from the Appellant.
- **55 Fitzroy Park, 2018/3672/P.** Members were advised that additional information had been submitted to the London Borough of Camden by the Applicant and the City Corporation was responding as necessary.
- **The Water House, Millfield Lane. 2017/3692/P.** The Superintendent advised that the works were ongoing, and a meeting would take place the following evening where an update on the work progress would be provided. It was noted that a Risk Assessment would need to take place to inform a code of conduct for vehicle use of the lane following the completion of the works.
- **Jack Straws Castle, 2017/2064/P, 2017/2211/L, 2017/2171/P.** Members were advised that a planning representation had been submitted by the City Corporation.
- **Athlone House.** The Superintendent advised that following the representation made against the proposed gate design, a revised application was submitted and subsequently approved.
- In response to a query concerning 'Harry's Land', Members were advised that a letter had been drafted to the owner concerning the control of Japanese Knot Weed. The owner would be invited to meet to Chairman to discuss how the land will be managed in future.

Grazing

- Members were advised that following the small grazing trial, Officers were exploring new sites for a further trial in 2020, with proposals to follow.

Swimming

- Members were informed that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had sent two letters concerning the fatality of a swimmer at the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond on 1 June 2019. The letters confirmed the HSE had determined that the death was not a 'work-related' incident and would not fall to the HSE to investigate further. The HSE provided some points of advice concerning matters found during the course of their enquiries.
- Members were advised that the heatwave in July and August saw the swimming facilities operating at maximum capacity which presented significant challenges to staff. This had a knock-on effect with members of the public entering other ponds which are not Lifeguarded or safe to swim in. A review of the issues, which arose during the 2019 summer season has been undertaken and discussed with both the Swim Forum and the Sports Advisory Forum.
- The Superintendent noted that the number of swimmers accessing the three Bathing Ponds had increased by 100% since 2010/11.
- With regards to a query concerning contactless payments, Members were advised that offering multiple payment options through "The Journey to Payment Project" remained a priority.
- A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) stated that the issues experienced at the Bathing Ponds during the summer also needed to be factored into a review, which should look at swimming as a whole. Relevant parties would need to be involved in the review to ensure a positive impact.

Playgrounds

- It was noted that planning applications for the Adventure, Preachers Hill and Vale of Health Playgrounds had been submitted and additional information has been requested by the London Borough of Camden prior to validating the planning applications.

Heath Extension Meeting Room

- Members were advised that the meeting room on the Heath Extension had been prepared for use. Hourly rental fees for hiring the room have been included in the Fees & Charges Report. A consultation seeking views on future catering provision at the site would commence shortly.

Forest Schools

- Members were advised that a number of enquiries had been received relating to forest school activities through the Events Applications procedures.
- The Superintendent confirmed that the carrying capacity for the Heath would need to be established, and that zones for where Forest School activities could be undertaken would need to be identified. This would address concerns such as the impact on flora and fauna, compaction, erosion and the impact on other visitors.
- It was recommended that forest school activities already operating on the Heath should be put on a short-term licensing agreement while the carrying capacity and zones were established. Following further consultation, the aim would be to introduce the new licensing arrangements ahead of September 2020.
- Members were keen to ensure that commercial activity (including Forest Schools) did not have a detrimental impact on wildlife, the natural habitat and other users. It was agreed that balance was needed between children exploring nature and the Heath being overrun by large groups of children.
- A Member (Highgate Society) felt that a condition was needed to prevent deadwood being moved around the site as this would affect fungi and invertebrate.
- It was noted that some Forest Schools encouraged children to go to the toilet outside. It was agreed this would not be acceptable and would be covered in license arrangements.

Events

- The Leisure and Events Manager advised Members that it had been a successful year for events. He highlighted recent events including Give it a Go! day on 14 July 2019 which had over 6,000 visitors and the 21st Heath Duathlon on 1 September 2019, which had an increase in the number of applicants from previous years.
- Members were advised that in 2019 the Showman's Guild had taken on responsibility for the running of the three traditional fairs (Easter, Whitsun and August Bank Holiday) at the Heath which had gone well.
- Members were consulted on initial proposals from the Showman's Guild in relation to the 2020 and 2021 fairs. The Showman's Guild proposed that the Whitsun Fair should not take place and that instead the Easter Fair be extended to cover two weekends with the proposed new arrangements to start in either 2020 or 2021. It was hoped this would improve attendance and make the fairs more viable. It was noted that a

change in the Showman's Guild Fair timetable would allow for a second event linked to the Affordable Art Fair (AAF) to be considered for 2021.

- A Member (Highgate Society) voiced concern for the fabric of the Heath if a Fair was to remain over a longer period of time (two consecutive weekends). Members were advised that the Fair would be restricted to using the Fairground site.
- Members were generally supportive of the principle to have a longer Easter Fair and no Whitsun Fair. However, it was felt that the change should be implemented in 2021, as there was not sufficient time to consider and review the changes for 2020.

Waste & Recycling

- The Superintendent advised that key messaging for the public to take waste home and recycle properly was being developed.
- The Superintendent stated that Euro bins were currently being trialled at Parliament Hill along with a new waste collection system. A new vehicle, which could pick-up and empty Euro and wheelie bins across the site, would need to be purchased or leased.
- It was noted that recycling contamination had reduced since separate recycling bins for glass, plastics, cans and paper had been trialled.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- Members feedback on the 2019 grazing trial;
- Members provide feedback following the Superintendent's verbal update on Swimming;
- Members provide feedback and views on the conclusions and next steps in relation to the Golders Hill Park Accessible Car Park Survey (appendix 3);
- Members provide feedback and views following the presentation on the outcomes from the recent engagement and consultation exercise relating to dog walking.

7.1 Appendix 1 - Divisional Plan Q2 update

Members received the Divisional Plan 2019/20 and the following comments were made:

- The Superintendent advised that extra information had been incorporated concerning veteran trees and the zoo as requested by Members.

- It was noted that priority A DP4 Asset Management Plan (AMP) for Hampstead Heath was marked as completed. The Superintendent confirmed that the high-level AMP itself was completed but he would provide further details on the next steps of the project.
- A Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) queried why projects D DP4 and D DP6 were behind schedule. Members were advised that the Communications and Engagement Plan (D DP4) was currently in draft and would come to the next meeting. The project to provide contactless payments (D DP6) was behind schedule due to technical issues relating to connectivity, security and ensuring the equipment and software is compliant with financial procedures. The Chairman and Deputy Chair were particularly keen for contactless payments to become a feature at the Heath and were pushing for these issues to be resolved.

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7.2 Appendix 2 - Hampstead Heath Wildlife Camera Trap Survey 2018

Members received a report from the 2018 Hampstead Heath wildlife camera trap survey.

Members were advised the survey findings indicated that the Heath was an important location for hedgehogs. Foxes, rabbit, muntjac deer and a badger were also recorded.

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7.3 Appendix 3 - Golders Hill Park Accessible Car Park Survey Report

Members considered the Golders Hill Park Accessible Car Park Survey Report and the following comments were made:

- Members were advised that there were significant traffic management problems in the area. A discussion around the difficulties in opening the car park at weekends under the current operating procedures had taken place on the Committee walk.
- It was noted that only 42 survey responses were received.
- With regards to Blue Badge parking in the local area around the Park, the Superintendent confirmed that allocated Blue Badge parking spaces were provided on the roads around and adjacent to the Park.
- A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) stated that the report did not describe the issues experienced at the car park during weekends, meaning that those completing the survey would not understand all of the problems.

- It was noted that the criteria for Blue Badge holders changed in August 2019.
- The Superintendent noted the next steps of the project would be to commence an Equality Impact Assessment and appoint a specialist design consultant. In the meantime, increased parking compliance checks would be undertaken by staff to ensure only Blue Badge holders are using the car park. Members agreed that wider consultation was required on any proposed changes to the access arrangements.
- Members were advised that the Heath had been approached by the London Borough of Camden regarding a Park and Stride scheme. This scheme encourages parents and carers to use local car parks and then walk the last part of the journey to school. Members felt the emphasis should be on ensuring public transport provision was sufficient and suitable. It was also felt that encouraging parking schemes across the Heath car parks would create capacity, pollution and safety issues for Heath visitors. Members encouraged positive engagement with the London Borough of Camden with the emphasis being on developing non-car-based options only, e.g. walking and cycling.

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8. **CODE OF CONDUCT PRESENTATION**

Members received a presentation by Jon Sheaff concerning the survey results in relation to developing a dog walking (and personal fitness trainer) code of conduct at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. The following comments were made:

- It was agreed that there were a higher number of dogs visiting the Heath than before with individuals bringing a number of dogs. This meant that a clear framework comprising of a Code of Conduct and licensing system was needed.
- The Hampstead Heath bylaws were written in 1932 and do not include any provisions concerning faeces.
- There were consistent themes across the London open spaces that had dog licensing in place including waste, behaviour, dog numbers and restraint.
- Two outdoor consultation events took place in July. Views were sought from dog owners, non-dog owners and commercial dog walkers to ensure a good range of opinions.
- An online questionnaire was developed asking 10 key questions and 1,346 responses were received providing a strong dataset.

- It was noted that a cap on the number of dogs each individual can walk could present an animal welfare issue if commercial dog walkers left dogs in a vehicle and swapped them based on the capped number.
- Members agreed the key issues were how to publicise the benefits of a Code of Conduct to encourage good behaviour and the need to provide a structure to support this, e.g. bins, information, messaging, bags.
- The Code of Conduct was planned to be launched in 2020 following further consultation
- It was noted that some flea treatments contained chemicals which were highly toxic to aquatic plants and animals. Therefore, it was important that access to water bodies on the Heath was controlled.
- A Member (Friends of Kenwood) was disappointed that the survey was conducted in July, August and early September when a high proportion of people go away and noted that a number of individuals in the Kenwood area still wished to input.
- It was queried (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee) whether introducing a licensing scheme would impact on other open spaces, as commercial dog walkers sought alternative sites which did not have a licensing scheme in place.
- Members were advised that all 32 London Boroughs were looking at dog licensing and agreed that commercial dog walkers should pay a licensing fee. The charges for the Licensing scheme would be based on benchmarking.
- A Member felt there were fragmented approaches to dog licensing across London and a unified approach was needed across the board. It was agreed that education and communications by the City Corporation was key to the success of the initiative and the Chairman confirmed that messaging would follow once the final outcomes were finalised.
- A Member was interested in the balance of strong inputs between dog owners versus non-dog owners and highlighted the need to capture all views for buy-in by all.
- The Director of Open Spaces advised that Burnham Beeches had been operating dog control orders for six years and had defined dog walking areas and a Code of Conduct in operation due to its high conservation value as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- A Member (Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee) felt that faeces was a huge problem and it was impossible to watch more than one dog at all times, especially in a woodland or forest setting.

- With regards to potential dog zone areas, a Member (Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee) highlighted that this would not be enforceable unless the areas were fenced off.
- A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) stated that the safety of children was the biggest risk concerning dogs and needed to be considered carefully.

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9. **FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW UPDATE**

Members received a verbal update by the Director of Open Spaces providing Members with an update on the Fundamental Review. The following comments were made:

- Members were advised that whilst there was pressure on budgets, the Fundamental Review provided a focus for looking at efficiency, innovation and income generation across all Departments.
- The Chief Officers of each Department have been asked to prepare options and prioritisation which would be submitted for review by the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) in November 2019.
- Members were advised that the efficiency was the focus for the Open Spaces Department and powers under the Open Spaces Act would be utilised to advance opportunities for income generation which were not feasible before.
- The Director was concerned regarding impacts to service delivery after April 2020 but did not feel that this would have a significant effect in the first year.
- Members voiced concern that they would not have time to review the options being presented to P&R in November 2019.
- A Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) felt that a balance was required between commercial activity and other activity stating that the Committee needed to be actively consulted as this was where Members could offer the most help.
- The Chairman and Deputy Chair confirmed they were involved in all central discussions as Members of P&R. It was agreed that a summary of the efficiencies and impacts be brought to the next meeting.

10. **FEES & CHARGES 2020-21**

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath setting out the proposed fees and charges for a range of sports facilities and services provided at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park for 2020/21 along with the proposed fees and charges for Weddings and Civil Ceremonies for 2021/22.

Members were advised the fees for football, rugby, cricket and the hire of changing rooms were held at the 2019/20 rates as these charges were all at the higher end of fees when compared to comparators. It was also hoped that the new room hire charges would be implemented from November 2019, pending agreement from the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee.

An increase to car parking charges by 8% for 0-2 hours & 2-4 hours and 9% for the additional hours was recommended as the current costs were significantly below current benchmarking. It was noted that car parks would remain less expensive than local comparators despite the increase.

A Member (Representative of Clubs using facilities on the Heath) noted that there were 16 different price lines for athletics and 29 for swimming and questioned if this was necessary.

In response to a query (Friends of Kenwood) on the local benchmarking for car parks, Members were advised that car parks at the Royal Free Hospital and within the London Borough of Camden were used.

RESOLVED – That:-

- The Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, Highgate Wood Consultative Group and Queen's Park Consultative Group discuss the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21 and 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report;
- The views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, Highgate Wood Consultative Group, and Queen's Park Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their 13 November 2019 meeting.

11. QUESTIONS

There were none.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman reminded Members of the following upcoming event dates:

- London Youth Games – 18 November 2019
- Southern Counties Cross Country Championship – 25 January 2020

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting on 27 January 2020 at 7.00pm was noted.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Leanne Murphy
leanne.murphy@cityoflondon.gov.uk