

QUEEN'S PARK CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Wednesday, 7 October 2020

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Queen's Park Consultative Group held on
Wednesday, 7 October 2020 at 3.00 pm

Present

Members:

Anne Fairweather (Chair)
Karina Dostalova (Deputy Chairman)
Ruby Sayed
Richard Brindley
Vicky Zentner

Officers:

Colin Buttery	-	Director of Open Spaces
Bob Warnock	-	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Richard Gentry	-	Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Leanne Murphy	-	Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Blandy, Virginia Bonham Carter (represented by Richard Brindley), Councillor James Denselow, Helen Durnford, Councillor Neil Nerva and Councillor Eleanor Southwood.

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

There were none.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting held on 9 September 2020 were received.

5. DRAFT MID TERM REPORT - QUEEN'S PARK CHARITY (NO. 232986)

Members received a report of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath presenting the draft Annual Report on activities at Queen's Park for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

Members were advised that this report proposed a different approach to engaging with Members of the Queen's Park Consultative Group on activities at Queen's Park. Once finalised, the draft Annual Report would be included in the Trustees Annual Report as required by the Charity Commission.

Members went through the recommendations of the report and the following comments were made:

Further work in order to deliver improvements to the sandpit and adjacent toilet block at Queen's Park

- In response to queries regarding the progress of the sandpit and toilet block project, Officers confirmed that redevelopment of the toilet had progressed to Gateway 3/4 but the impact of Covid-19 meant a review of all Capital Projects. Previously a decision had been made to split the sandpit and toilet projects, submitting the toilet redevelopment through the Gateway process. A recent decision to re-prioritise projects across the organisation required the Division to defer and rescope the toilet redevelopment project. An existing project for toilet refurbishment exists in the current Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) the Park Manager will discuss and consider options with the City Surveyor's Department.
- A Member enquired if Officers would continue with maintenance until funding was acquired. Members were advised that money would be used to cover necessary break down and repairs in the meantime.
- The Deputy Chairman highlighted the significant amount of time this project had been in discussion and was frustrated that it had barely moved on. She did not feel it was cost effective to do some of the work if it made up part of a bigger bid of works to take place later and requested clarity. Officers confirmed that works that could be delivered from the £35k in CWP funds should progress as soon as possible as the next opportunity to resubmit would not be for at least another 12 months.
- A gate and planting would be considered to make access between the sandpit and toilet block easier for users.
- The Director of Open Spaces stated that the situation had changed dramatically for the City Corporation who were already undertaking a review of its Capital Programme prior to the pandemic and had since increased from to Covid-19 expenditure pressures. Whilst there continued to be significant competition from numerous projects, Officers were trying to undertake the smaller more urgent works where possible.
- In light of the considerable wait to bid for the entire toilet block project, Members supported the use of the £35k from the CWP to improve the toilet and consider access between the toilet and sandpit which would be a significant help to users.
- At the request of the Chair, Officers agreed to bring proposals for these works to the next meeting. It was noted that local community groups were kept engaged at all times regarding projects and progression and provided ongoing feedback.

Review of the Queen's Park Conservation Management Plan

- Members were advised that the plan was developed in 2014. Officers were in discussion with a company to carry out a mid-term review of the plan during the winter and would be presented to Members in the spring.
- Members agreed the woodland walk needed careful management, particularly now during Covid-19. Members were concerned that the woodland path was naturally widening from visitors trying to avoid other people. Implementation of a temporary path to create a two-way system was suggested.
- A Member queried if the woodland walk could be made one way as it was a narrower area making it difficult to pass people safely. Officers stated that this would be considered along with monitoring of footfall from all entrances and a potential complete closure of the woodland walk. It was hoped that with signage, paths could be self-policed without conflict.
- It was noted that visitor numbers would likely decrease in winter.
- A Member questioned if a “Harry Styles One Direction” approach for the Park had worked as there had been conflicts in other open spaces during the first lockdown between walkers/joggers/dog walkers/cyclists when one direction enforcement was brought in.
- Another Member felt that jogging should be banned completely on the pathways as this caused conflict with those walking which were in the majority. Members agreed that joggers could not be banned.
- It was noted that implementing a one-way system for runners around the entire Park had limited success. Where possible, widening the pathway with keep left or right signage was felt to be the most sensible way to manage people.

Development of a Park Activity Plan

- Members were advised that social media continued to be used to promote the Park and its activities and events. This would be developed further as a key promotional and communication tool.
- A main focus was to continue developing a Friends of Queen’s Park group in the hope this could be utilised to help with fundraising, e.g. for the development of the Children’s Sandpit and play area, and volunteering activity.
- The Chair highlighted the excellent work produced by Heath Hands and welcomed volunteering ideas for the Park.

- Officers advised that pedestrian counters used at entrances had failed and regrettably not captured the full picture of visitor numbers for the year. Subsequent updates to the system would be brought in.
- A Member highlighted the importance of accurate data capture particularly in terms of building a case for additional funding and investment for the open spaces.
- A Member was concerned that the gate counters, which normally dealt with visitor numbers of approximately one million per year, were not sophisticated enough to capture the higher numbers caused by Covid-19. Officers confirmed that the technology was getting older and required repairs and software updates. New systems were being considered. An alternative was to view Google Analytics data to indicate footfall.
- In response to a query concerning use of photo comparison to show impact of increased visitors, it was confirmed that there were no available images but some anecdotal data was available to assist the report capturing and assessing the Park's summer months.
- The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the Open Spaces Department was working on data capturing the impact of increased visitors across all of the Corporation's Open Spaces. Data was being shared between sites across all of London and would be used forcefully in funding applications.
- The Chair noted data was supported by the obvious visible signs of compaction and the significant impact of rubbish. It was hoped that more funding would be made available to deal with the impact of higher numbers. The Chair also hoped that making the Queen's Park charity more visible and active would assist as the City Corporation's budget become more and more under pressure.

Events Policy

- It was noted that all planned events at Queen's Park had been cancelled since March 2020.
- The new Events Policy enabled better control and scrutiny for events applications. It was hoped that this, alongside the new licensing scheme for professional dog walking and sports, would further develop opportunities at the Park. Officers confirmed that all relevant information would be shared with Members as the scheme developed.
- Members were advised that a key project for 2021 would be the retender of the Queen's Park Café which was currently operating under a tenancy at will by Hoxton Beach. Members would be kept updated through this process.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- Note the contents of this report;
- Share their thoughts on achievements at Queen's Park and how the Park meets the priorities, aims and objectives outlined within the Corporate Plan 2018-23, the Departmental Business Plan, 2020/21 and the objectives of the Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Kilburn charity.
- Discuss the revised priorities for April 2021 onwards be included in the Plans for Future Periods section of the Annual Report when it is submitted in Spring 2021:
 - Refurbishment of the Queen's Park Children's Sandpit
 - Improve provision of equipment in the Children's Play Area
 - Consult on, finalise and implement the Queen's Park Woodland Walk Management Plan 2020
 - Discuss the Cyclical Works Programme for the Queen's Park Toilets
 - Review of the Queen's Park Conservation Management Plan
 - Develop a Park Activity Plan
 - Deliver the tender for the Queen's Park Café.

6. **GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members received an oral update from the Chair concerning the City Corporation's Governance Review and noted Lord Lisvane's report.

The Chair stated that Lisvane's report was a comprehensive review of everything including the Standing Orders. A major review point was the number of Committees which was higher than the number of Members. It was acknowledged that some areas were addressed in more detail than others, with the Open Spaces as a whole considered to be much less detailed than needed.

The Review recommended the disbandment of a number of Consultative Committees, including the Queen's Park Consultative Group, and the merger of the four Open Spaces Grand Committees into one overarching Committee. The Chair emphasized that the statutory requirements for Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest prohibited this and that Lord Lisvane had not fully understood the implications of the legislation.

The Chair and Deputy Chairman stressed their view that consultative groups were very helpful and had an important role in terms of accountability and local engagement. The Chair was keen to keep Members involved in the process and share their views on the recommendations.

A Member felt that the input of locals was essential and helped the City Corporation understand the local issues and concerns of their open spaces. It was felt to be a huge negative if they lost their voice through the Consultative Committees.

A Member highlighted the invaluable relationship between QPARA and the Consultative Group working together to deal with local issues and initiatives.

Members agreed that the Consultative Group brought formal structure for engagement which must be maintained for efficient decision-making.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments and agreed that these views would be shared. The Chair saw the whole review process as an opportunity to streamline their work and ensure best practice.

7. **QUESTIONS**

There were no questions.

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

There were none.

9. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The date of the next meeting on 21 April 2021 was noted.

The meeting ended at 4.03 pm

Chairman

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