

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	Date(s): 15 June 2022
Subject: Future arrangements for Weddings and Civil Ceremonies and Hampstead Heath and Queen's Park	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	N
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Stefania Horne, Assistant Director	

Summary

On 9 June 2014 Committee approval was given for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies to take place at the Hill Garden and Pergola. Approval for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies to take place at the Queen's Park Bandstand was granted on 21 September 2015.

Licences have been obtained from London Borough of Camden and Brent to establish these locations as licenced venues.

Ceremonies have been supported by existing keeper teams at Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park, and also require a substantial amount of manager's time.

It is proving challenging to ascertain the financial performance of the current arrangements as substantial staff time is required, and staff are taken away from day to day duties, with casual staff engaged to attend to regular duties. There is also a limitation in developing the business within our teams due to the specialist nature of the activities and the skillsets required. The report sets out the proposal to enter into a two year concession with a specialist wedding supplier to manage weddings and civil ceremonies at Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park.

Recommendation

It is recommended that: -

- Members agree the proposal to engage a specialist wedding contractor on a two year contract with a concession to take over the provision of the service at Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park through an income share formula., as set out in para 12.

Main Report

Background

1. On 9 June 2014 this Committee granted to enable weddings and civil ceremonies to take place at the Hill Garden and Pergola. The venue is licenced by the London Borough of Camden. Since 2014 between 7 to 22 ceremonies have taken place each year.
2. Approval to enable Weddings and Civil Ceremonies at the Queen's Park Bandstand was granted on 21 September 2015. The venue is licenced by the London Borough of Brent. 6 ceremonies have taken place at Queen's park since 2019.

Current Position

3. To date staff have proved invaluable in managing the ceremonies, which are vastly different from the events usually taking place within Open Spaces. Each is obviously a very personal occasion and needs to be managed as such, With the parting of the business manager who managed weddings, there has been an opportunity to review the business and measure its long term sustainability.
4. From the events that have already taken place it has become clear that the service provided is resource intensive and is taking away key staff from their main duties to host weddings. A substantial resource at managerial level is also required.
5. This year from March to October, 17 ceremonies have been booked on Thursday Friday and Saturdays at Golders Hill Park. 1 ceremony has been booked at Queen's Park.
6. The viewing meeting conducted before a booking is taken and the follow up meeting to complete arrangements has proved to be a particularly important part of the process, as it provides clarity from the start and manages expectations.
7. Although receptions cannot be held at the venue, couples have requested the opportunity to drink a toast following their ceremony and have brought their own drinks and canapes for this purpose. This has proven very successful and we are currently seeking licences to develop this part of the offer as part of the packages.
8. The 2-hour hire period for the venues has worked effectively in most cases.
9. Storage facilities for the items required for the events, such as chairs, tables, barriers and signs are currently located within Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park.

Proposal

10. Due to the very labour intense nature of the activities and the specialist nature of the provision of these activities, it is proposed to engage a specialist wedding contractor on a two year contract with a concession to take over the provision of the service at Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park through an income share formula.
11. It is proposed that there will be no change to the current venue guest capacities. The contractor would be responsible for setting fees and charges according to the market. The frequency of the ceremonies will remain unchanged but a

review with the contractor might be necessary in the future, with the principle that the venues are to remain accessible to members of the public.

12. It is envisaged that these arrangements will be trialled for two years.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. This proposal contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23: Contribute to a flourishing society, Support a thriving economy and Shape outstanding environments.
14. The proposed changes outlined in this report would contribute towards the achievement of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028 Strategic Outcomes A: The Heath is maintained as a flourishing green space and historic landscape, B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors, C: The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors and D: Greater number of and diversity of People taking care of the Heath.

Conclusion

15. The proposal to enter into a two year concession with a specialist wedding supplier to manage weddings and civil ceremonies at Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park will provide a transparent picture of the financial performance of these activities and will reduce the impact on the day to day duties of our keepers.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 (Non-public)

Background Papers

- Weddings and Civil Partnerships at the Hill Garden Pergola – Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee, 9 June 2014.
- Application to operate Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies at the Queen's Park Bandstand – Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee, 21 September 2015.
- Weddings and Civil Ceremonies at the Hill Garden and Pergola – Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee, 20 July 2015.

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