

## QUEEN'S PARK CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Wednesday 8 May 2024, 1pm meeting

The Rotunda, St Anne's Brondesbury, 125 Salusbury Road, NW6 6RG

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|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Members:</b>   | William Upton KC CC (Chair)<br>(WU) | Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queens Park<br>Committee           |
| <b>Co-Optees:</b> | Ruby Sayed (RuS)                    | City of London Corporation Member (meeting only<br>- joined online) |
|                   | Cllr Steve Crabb (SC)               | London Borough of Brent (meeting only)                              |
|                   | Flavia Rittner (FR)                 | Queen's Park Area Residents Association                             |
|                   | Virginia Brand (VB)                 | Queen's Park Area Residents Association                             |
|                   | Robin Sharp (RoS)                   | Queen's Park Area Residents Association                             |
|                   | Claire Gillan (CG)                  | Queen's Park Area Residents Association                             |
|                   | John Blandy (JB)                    | Queen's Park Area Residents Association                             |
| <b>Officers:</b>  | Bill LoSasso (BL)                   | Assistant Director, City of London                                  |
|                   | Charlotte Williams (CW)             | Head of Operations and Parks  |
|                   | Ciaran O'Keeffe (CO'K)              | Formal Parks Manager  |
|                   | Helen Evans (HE)                    | Minutes (meeting only)  |

### 1. **Apologies**

Cllr Eleanor Southwood, Paul Brown, Vicky Zentner, Cllr Neil Nerva

### 2. **Approval of previous minutes**

- a. It was noted that QPARA representatives had sent in comments on the November 2023 minutes. After discussion, it was decided that they would be appended to the minutes from November 2023.
- b. It was agreed that future amendment proposals include the Chairman.

### 3. **Assistant Director's Update**

#### a. **Staffing recruitment**

- i. It was clarified that there was a minimum of two persons working per shift at the park, at times supplemented by casuals, and that Paul Brown is the Senior Ranger, with a Head Gardener and Ranger beneath him. There is a team of nine altogether.

#### b. **The sandpit project**

- i. It was mentioned to the Consultative Group that a sign is needed to communicate to the public the expected timeframe for the opening of the sandpit.

**ACTION (CW and CO'K):** arrange for the fabrication of signage to communicate to the public, and arrange social media posts.

- ii. CW went on to discuss the unforeseeable delays to the project including the discovery of plan tree roots which disrupted work, changes in staffing, administrative complications, and inflation eroding capital for the project.
- iii. After a site meeting earlier in the morning, CW and CO'K have identified another 1-2 weeks' work, with signage to be added in the next week. The sandpit can open immediately after a successful inspection.
- iv. Concern was expressed over these delays, questions posed on how might we mitigate mistakes on future projects to save escalating costs and time scales.
- v. It was mentioned that criticism the project was attracting on NextDoor, and that he has been helping to clear up queries and concerns online, apparently the lack of clarity on CIL funding provided from Brent Council for the project has attracted concern and criticism. He suggested signage and social media to emphasise the good that will come from the project, and that the opening ceremony should be marked in symbolic way.

**ACTION (Queen's Park):** arrange an opening event for the sandpit with project and local stakeholders.

- vi. WU mentioned that whilst this project has gone on longer than expected, we have learnt from the experience; this has been a pilot for when funding comes in from different pots.
- vii. BL gave his thanks to CW for seeing the project through to near completion.
- viii. CW went on to further say that the project encountered so many issues, but that she hopes it will be finished by June. After the visit earlier in the morning it was agreed that the contractors, Blakedown, could reduce the size of the compound so the gate current closed can be re-opened in the next week or so. The Consultative Group accepted there has been exceptional circumstances.

**c. Toilet refurbishment**

- i. CW clarified that the insurance funding was to complete the external works to the toilet block following a recent break in and vandalism, but that the project required additional funding for the internal works. City Surveyors are awaiting the funding to be approved.
- ii. CW advised she was not yet aware of how much funding may be forthcoming from City Surveyor's for the interior works, but it was expected to be for the full amount needed. She also mentioned that this would be for full decoration, but that designs are not available. Existing money was used for the collapsing of a drain, which has delayed the project. Concern was expressed that the refurbishment of the toilet block was being discussed 4-5 years ago, and that this is long overdue.

**ACTION (CW):** to clarify the works being undertaken and accessibility of the plans.

**d. Management plans (1-year and 5-year)**

- i. BL mentioned to the Consultative Group that we have a 1-year management plan for 2024, created to enable applications for the Green Flag and Green Heritage awards. We are hiring a consultant to help us develop/update existing management plans this fiscal year for all the NLOS spaces. The 5-year plans will look at short- and long-term objectives.
- ii. FB mentioned the 1-year management plans was not published anywhere.

**ACTION (CW): to share one-year management plan with members**

- iii. Concern was expressed on the standing water and drainage on site. CW mentioned that this would all be considered in a 5-year plan.

**e. Paddling pool**

- i. CW updated the Consultative Group to say that a technical report has been produced for the pump house, which has come in at over £34k. We also need to take into consideration that the paddling pool requires a full-time, trained member of staff to supervise when open. We need to do a cost-benefit analysis and decide whether we can gain and apply for funding to get this project going, but that it is unlikely to be this year.
- ii. It was questioned why there was no funding available when the reason it was out of service was due to lack of budget spent in upkeep and maintenance for the past 5 years. BL commented that we do not control capital budget and that the Corporation and division has resource constraints.
- iii. WU asked whether a splash park could be considered, as without the need for a member of staff this will be less costly in the long term.
- iv. QPARA put forward they would like to help raise funds as the community feels the loss of the paddling pool. There was mention of a potential donation of £7k available.
- v. CW advised that we need to create a report on the full cost first.

**ACTION (CW): to look at true cost of project and create report for this project when time permits.**

- vi. RuS mentioned there might be pots of money available to apply for, including green technology grants and that she would be happy to guide and advise on this.

**ACTION (HE): to share email addresses to enable communication and advice on this.**

- vii. WU questioned the time frame for this. BL said the sandpit project is still ongoing and is the top priority, and that due to other pressures on staff resources, this is not possible to be before the next HHHWQP meeting cycle deadline.

**f. Cafe retendering**

- i. VB expressed thanks to the team for the umbrellas at the cafe, with which the Consultative Group members are very satisfied. Several more may be required.
- ii. The Consultative Group asked if the opening hours of the cafe could be extended, as it currently closes at 5pm all year round. CO'K has advised he

has reached out to Hoxton Beach to query why they close at 5pm, and that we can look into extending their hours.

**ACTION (CW & CO'K): to look into the licence with Hoxton Beach and recommend extending their hours of operation.**

**g. Events**

- i. There was a question on the budget source being used for the children's entertainment. CW clarified that CoL have topped up the existing donation with local funding.
- ii. It was expressed that there is a lack of clarity around the charity's account and its donations made to the charity for both spaces.

**ACTION (BL): to look into if/how to differentiate between HW and QP donated funds in charity pot.**

**ACTION (BL): to contact City Bridge Foundation (Jack Joslin) to help look into community grant application.**

- iii. BL mentioned that there is a new position advertised for Head of Development & Partnerships to try and maximise potential fundraising across NLOS.

(Cllr Crabb had to leave the meeting)

**h. Woodland walk**

- i. BL mentioned that whilst we have had consultation on this project, it would be a resource and budget intensive project, and reviewing a complicated project such as this would take significant officer time, which is not immediately available. FB added that this was supported locally with 85% of residents in support of the project. BL added that we will commit to looking at the proposed project, but that we need to thoroughly look at what it would take to implement, project cost, look at staff capacity.
- ii. RoS noted what he believed was a lack of commitment and interest in the proposed project, which officers were able to correct as a mistaken interpretation.
- iii. Following an enquiry about third-party managing the project, officers noted that expertise exists in house, but at the moment a full specification or cost is not known, though includes the loss of two holes from the Pitch-and-Putt course, which would need to be closed during the project and reconfigured.

**4. Questions & AOB**

**a. Charities and funding**

- i. BL mentioned that we are having a charities review at the Corporation, and that strategies are being put together for fundraising.

**b. Representation at Queen's Park Consultative Group**

- i. WU mentioned that Salusbury School and Ark Franklin Primary School should be approached to see if anyone wishes to join the Consultative Group.

- ii. WU mentioned to the Consultative Group that the QPCG is to address big issues. The committee then went on to discuss attendance at monthly liaison and QPARA meetings presently and historically. CO'K mentioned that staff ought to attend the liaison meeting every other month which is enough for continual communication with anything urgent communicated ad hoc, with QPARA meetings being attended on a quarterly basis if possible.
- iii. Representation of member organisations of the Consultative Group was discussed, including limiting attendees from each group to achieve equity in representation. WU noted that attendees would be reasonably limited, with additional attendees possible if the agenda warranted.