

QUEEN'S PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Wednesday, 20 November 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 20 November
2013 at 11.30 am

Present

Members:

Jeremy Simons (Chairman)
Virginia Rounding (Deputy Chairman)
Karina Dostalova
Barbara Newman CBE
John Blandy (Queen's Park Area Residents' Association)
Helen Durnford (Queen's Park Area Residents' Association)
Paul Stratton (Local Schools Liaison)

Officers:

Alistair MacLellan	- Committee and Member Services Officer
Simon Lee	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park & Highgate Wood
Richard Gentry	- Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Jonathan Meares	- Highgate Wood & Conservation Manager

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mary Arnold and Annalisa Saba.

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

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2013 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Tennis Courts

The Queen's Park Manager noted that the in-person advance booking system had been reviewed over the summer and that feedback had been largely positive. In response to a question from a member the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath confirmed that there were no plans to implement an online booking system given that the in-person system was working well and that furthermore this would have a detrimental impact on existing staff time and

resources, given that activities such as the drafting of a business case would need to be carried out.

In response to a question from a member the Park Manager confirmed that the current allocation of four courts for coaching children and two for adults had proved satisfactory and had not been expanded upon.

Personal Trainers

A member raised her concerns over the use of the Park by personal trainers, noting that Wandsworth had recently introduced licences for such activity at the cost of £350 per annum. She felt that it was inappropriate for persons to be profiting from the use of City of London facilities at a time when City of London resources were under pressure. She highlighted a recent Atlantic Sports Development Soccer School held in the Park during July and August that had been sponsored by a local Estate Agent and advertised locally. She noted she had no issue with such events in principle, given what they offered to local residents, but with the fact the City of London was not receiving, arguably, income it was entitled to from such activities.

The Superintendent said that he shared her concerns but that the issue was governed by the legal powers at the City of London's disposal. He added that whilst an organisation like the Royal Parks had the power to regulate such activities, the City of London did not and that this reflected the City's current in-house legal advice. He noted that it would perhaps be appropriate to seek Counsel's advice on the issue.

The Chairman added that the issue of licencing was one that affected the whole of the City of London's activities, and that for example the issue of street trading was currently being looked at. He warned that in order to gain the licencing powers alluded to it might be necessary to seek a Various Powers bill in Parliament, and that such a process took years and was very expensive.

The member who first raised the issue said that she felt the City of London was using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, and rather than seeking clarification of its legal powers, or seeking new ones, it should simply licence the personal trainers. She noted that the City of London currently charged for use of football pitches, and queried why this principle could not be applied in this instance.

The Chairman replied that the City of London could not accept the reputational risk of acting outside of its powers. The Superintendent added that the City had the power to charge for football pitches as the power to do so clearly exist in current regulations, which was not the case for licencing of personal trainers.

Twitter Feed

The Park Manager noted that the use of a dedicated Twitter feed for the park had been considered, but due to his recent secondment to West Ham Park this had not been progressed and was currently a low priority. He added that the Park was already promoted on Facebook.

Representation on the Joint Consultative Group

The Park Manager noted he had approached some groups prior to the last meeting, and that in the meantime he understood there to be some concern over the perceived lack of geographic relationship between these groups and the Park. Nevertheless he added that he would like to continue to pursue the issue of greater representation and that he was keen to involve Transition Town Kensal to Kilburn given they operated a vegetable plot in the Park.

Recycling Bins

In response to a question from a member over the number of recycling bins in the Park, the Park Manager noted that there were around sixty recycling bins at various locations and that it was planned to reduce this number to around twenty-five.

QPJCG Visit to Hampstead Heath

The Chairman noted that the visit to Hampstead Heath would now take place at the next meeting of the Group in June 2014.

Queen's Park Café Lease

In response to a question from a member the Superintendent replied that the new café lease would be signed shortly and backdated as appropriate.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE REPORT

The Superintendent took the opportunity to note that the past few months had been difficult due to the Queen's Park Manager being on secondment to West Ham Park on a two to three day per week basis, in order to assist the Superintendent of City Gardens and West Ham Park until the vacant West Ham Park Manager position was filled.

The Queen's Park Manager then updated those present on the following issues:

Background

- He noted that the Park had been busy since the last meeting of the Group, seeing over one million visits. He further noted that, whilst it was not made explicit in his written update, the Park's popularity needed to be seen in the context of the recent City of London report *The Value of Green Space to London and Londoners*. Moreover within the Park the Children's Play area and the Children's Zoo remained popular with consistent visitor numbers.

Ecology and Environment

- Lawn maintenance in the Quiet Garden would be carried out, with an outside contractor coming in to spray for weed, worms and moss. Staff would carry out in-house maintenance, including scarification and aeration, with support being provided by staff within the wider North London Open Spaces division.

- Summer bedding was being removed from the Quiet Garden and would lie fallow until spring 2014.
- Maintenance work would be carried out on the shrub border between the main body of the Park and the Quiet Garden.
- A variety of new grasses had been planted around the pond in the Children's Zoo at the suggestion of the visiting vet. The area had been 'goat proofed' to prevent the planting being damaged.
- New wooden planters had been installed next to the Children's Paddling Pool.
- Hazel trees and hedges would be planted in the new Children's Playing Area and would potentially involve volunteers.

Sports and Recreation

- The tennis courts would be sprayed for moss over the winter, and this process would now take place annually as part of the Annual Work Programme.
- Tennis coaching sessions over the summer had been a success and also a source of £3,157 in additional income. Additional marketing for children to increase representation was carried out using mobile stands, and further marketing for 2014 would be reviewed.
- Annual maintenance on the Pitch and Putt course would be carried out over winter. It would remain open with the use of temporary greens.
- Queen's Park Rangers had decided it was not cost-effective for them to hold soccer camps in the Park during school holidays. The Park Manager would approach them to see if they wish to reconsider their decision in time for 2014.
- The Spice Time Credits scheme had not seen much take-up within the Park, with only eight sessions on the Pitch and Putt or tennis courts being claimed. The Park Manager noted he would work with Spice to promote the scheme further.
- The Tennis courts and the Pitch and Putt course had been very popular during 2013, with £46,000 in income being generated by both, with a further £1,600 from tennis coaching sessions.
- No local schools had made arrangements to use the Park during 2013 for their sports days, but it had been noted some had used the Park informally.

In response to questions from the Chairman and members of the Group, the Park Manager confirmed that due to the poor take-up of children's tennis sessions he would look at reducing the number of these on offer. He clarified the dual arrangement for tennis sessions, noting that the half-term sessions saw the coach benefiting from all of the income whereas the City of London earned the income for sessions between May and September, part of which was paid to the coach in fees. The Superintendent confirmed that due to poor take-up it would be sensible to move away from this dual arrangement provided the value that a dedicated tennis coach offered to the Park was taken into account when formalising any future arrangements. Lastly, and in response to a member querying whether this was another example of an individual profiting from the use of City of London facilities, the Superintendent noted that the tennis coach was licensed given this was within the legal power of the City of London to do so.

Conservation and Heritage

- The Park Manager highlighted that due to his recent secondment to West Ham Park, progress on bringing a report on the revised Conservation Management Plan to the Group had been delayed and he hoped to bring the report to the Group at its June 2014 meeting instead. He noted that consultation had taken place on the CMP in September 2013 and a further round of consultation would take place in spring 2014.
- The Park Manager noted that the Park had retained its Green Flag in 2013 and had now received one each year since the scheme's inception in 1996.

Landscape Management

- The Conservation Manager updated the Group on the impact on the Park of the St Jude Storm on 28 October. He remarked that the Park had come off lightly overall, and had been closed for one day whilst trees were inspected for damage. These inspections had, as well as identifying short-term damage, also given staff the opportunity to consider longer term tree management works for the coming months.
- He noted that the incident of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) at the nearby King Edward VII Sports Ground had been sprayed and eradicated, but that the situation was being closely monitored.
- Massaria continued to be an issue within the Park given the presence of one hundred Plane trees. Branches at risk of failure continued to be removed to ensure public safety.
- The Ash tree near the café had been removed and was likely to be replaced by a Wild Service Tree.

- Two weeping willows near the Pitch and Putt course were due for repollarding.

In response to a question from a member the Conservation Manager confirmed that tree inspections were taking place on a regular basis, with the Tree Team visiting the park bimonthly.

In response to a request from a member the Conservation Manager confirmed he would look at opening up Woodland Walk to allow for the growth of smaller species, and that this could potentially form part of the overall management plan for the Park.

In response to a question from a member, the Conservation Manager confirmed that some of the horse chestnuts in the Park were due to be removed for safety reasons. He noted that whilst the canker affecting them could be treated, the treatment in question was expensive and arguably not value for money overall.

In response to a query from a member, the Conservation Manager confirmed that part of the relocated Ash branches had been attached to another tree using cables. As well as preserving the ecological value of the existing nest, the deadwood would also prove beneficial for bats. The Park Manager agreed to provide some photographs.

Operational Management

- The City Surveyor's Department had been instructed to carry out repairs to notice boards prior to new signage being installed in spring 2014.
- A new enclosure had been added to the Children's Zoo which would become home to three giant rabbits. The enclosure would be fox-proof.
- Seven new chickens and four ducks had been added to the Zoo over the summer.
- The Animal Attendant has spent some time with the Hampstead Heath Education Team with a view to developing formal education sessions for children visiting the Zoo. Local schools would be invited to participate at a cost of around £1-£2 per child.
- A member of staff had been verbally abused and grabbed when requesting a football team to leave the Park at closing time. The Police were informally advised of the incident.

Visitors and Community

- The Park hosted four outdoor films over the summer. Despite inclement weather the events attracted 500 visitors and raised £3,200 in income.
- Hiring of the bandstand had raised £1,900 in income.

- Queen's Park Day was held on 15 September 2013 and saw 7,000 people visit the Park.
- The Queen's Park Residents' Association may reintroduce the Book Festival in 2014.

A City of London member of the Group commented that she had attended the Queen's Park Day in September and wished to place on record her thanks for the organisation and hard work put into the event by the Queen's Park Residents' Association. She added that she had helped carry out consultation on the Conservation Management Plan on the day in question and had only had positive comments about both the Plan and the management of the Park overall.

At the request of the Chairman, it was decided to formally record the thanks of the Group for all of the hard work and dedication shown by the members of the Queen's Park Residents' Association in the organisation and delivery of Queen's Park Day 2013.

At the direction of the Chairman, the Group confirmed it was happy in principle for a further four films to be screened in the Park during 2014.

In response to a query from a member over why the City of London had the power to charge for film screenings, but not for personal trainers, the Superintendent replied that this was due to the films being in a static location and therefore covered by existing legislation. The Chairman requested that a report on the statutory powers available to regulate activity in the Park be brought to the Group's next meeting in June 2014.

A City of London member of the Group voiced her appreciation for receiving an invitation to Queen's Park Day by post.

In response to a question from a member, the Park Manager confirmed that bookings for the Children's Zoo would follow a similar system in operation at Hampstead Heath, in that scanned applications could be submitted by email. Free taster sessions would be offered initially to encourage uptake.

RESOLVED, that –

- The Group record its thanks for the hard work of the Queen's Park Residents' Association in organising Queen's Park Day 2013.
- A report of the Comptroller and City Solicitor summarising the statutory powers to regulate activities in Queen's Park come to the next meeting of the Group in June 2014.

5. **QUESTIONS**

Dogs

A member of the Group noted that dogs in the Park were required to be kept on leads, and that this had been the case for 15 years. She added that when this rule was first instituted it had been enforced by staff using whistles. However, she voiced her impression that the number of dogs off leads had increased significantly and that the rule was no longer enforced as well as it had been, and that this needed to change. She acknowledged that the Park Manager had put signs up to raise awareness.

The Park Manager noted that both he and staff still carried whistles and that these remained useful tools for enforcement. He added that the past 15 years had seen a reduction in staff resources within the Park and that this had implications for the level of staff presence and enforcement that was possible. He noted that staff were regularly reminded of their enforcement duties at staff meetings. He added that the Park Supervisor maintained a log of staff enforcement incidents and that in 2013 there had been 854 dog-related incidents and 1013 cycling incidents. The dogs figure represented an increase from 488 reported in 2012, and so there had clearly been an increase in the issue within the Park. He concluded that anti-social behaviour was a local police priority and so police regularly entered the Park to ensure dogs were not dangerous.

In response to a question from a member the Park Manager confirmed that the main cause of dogs being let off their leads appeared to be a lack of awareness of Park byelaws amongst the public.

The Superintendent added that it would help to carry out a period of vigorous enforcement to help raise awareness. He commented that any perceived lack of enforcement may be due to lack of staff confidence. He added that Hampstead Heath Constabulary had enforcement powers in Queen's Park as well as upon the Heath and it might be beneficial to seek their support.

A member of the Group noted that he sometimes took the opportunity to remind dog walkers within the Park who had let their animals off the lead that this was contrary to Park byelaws, and that there was a nearby park that allowed them to exercise their dogs off the lead.

Cycling

A member of the Group took the opportunity to raise similar concerns over cycling byelaws within the Park being disregarded. She added that the Royal Parks had good examples of notices that helped raise awareness amongst cyclists. She also noted that new cycle stands were being provided by the Mayor of London on approaches into the Park.

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

Superintendent of Hampstead Heath

The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group that the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath would be

attending before he moved on to his new role at Wimbledon and Putney Commons in early 2014. He took the opportunity to thank the Superintendent for his 12 years at the City of London and to wish him well for the future.

7. **DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting will be 11 June 2014 at 12:00pm in Parliament Hill Yard, Highgate Road, NW5. The meeting will be preceded by a walk on the Heath commencing at 10:00am.

The meeting ended at 12.46 pm

Chairman

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