

QUEEN'S PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Monday, 16 January 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group held at First Floor Meeting Room, Queen's Park Cafe, London NW6 on Monday, 16 January 2017 at 5.00 pm

Present

Members:

Virginia Rounding (Chairman)
Karina Dostalova (Deputy Chairman)
Deputy John Barker
Professor John Lumley
Barbara Newman
Virginia Bonham Carter (Ark Franklin Primary School)
Councillor Neil Nerva (London Borough of Brent)
John Blandy (Queen's Park Area Residents' Association)
Giovanna Torrico (Friends of Salusbury School)
Vicky Zentner (Kensal Rise Residents Association)

In attendance:

Jon Sheath - Jon Sheath Associates
Barbara Kaucky - Erect Architects

Officers:

Fern Aldous - Town Clerk's Department
Bob Warnock - Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Richard Gentry - Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Durnford (Queen's Park Area Residents' Association), Councillor Eleanor Southwood (London Borough of Brent) and Councillor James Denselow (London Borough of Brent).

2. INITIAL FEEDBACK AND LEARNING IN RELATION TO THE ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH CAFÉ USERS

The Committee received a presentation from Jon Sheath Associates who were undertaking a consultation exercise for the five park cafes across Hampstead Heath, Golders Hill Park, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park.

The Committee were updated on the background of the café procurement project, noting the following points.

- A procurement process was undertaken in 2014 on 5 café leases across the North London Open Spaces.
- Three of the Cafes (Parliament Hill Café at Hampstead Heath, the Golders Hill Park Café and the Highgate Wood Café) had been awarded

to the franchise Benugo, and the remaining two had been awarded to local providers.

- Benugo subsequently withdrew from the process in the face of large local opposition.
- Following extensive negotiations the winning bidder for the Queen's Park Café had also withdrawn from the process. The tenant at the Lido café had been operating, but has since ceased trading.
- All five cafes were currently on tenancy at will agreements with the original providers.
- A consultation exercise had begun, the results of which would inform the next steps to be taken.

The consultation exercise on the first three cafés had now been largely completed, and the two remaining cafes were due to follow the same process. The consultation had identified a number of desired outcomes for the cafes and these could be grouped into four areas, Economic, Social, Health and Environmental. The investigation process had also looked at a variety of models and the potential for cafes to offer additional services.

The survey on the Queen's Park Café, which formed the initial part of the consultation exercise, had a further two weeks to run and Members discussed the initial results. The following points were noted:

- 231 questionnaires had so far been received.
- The café was primarily occupied by families.
- A majority of users were in the younger age bracket.
- Users were not loyal to the café
- The quality of food was seen as the most important aspect of the café. Price was also high on the results.
- Healthy food was seen as more important than the diversity of the offer.
- People wanted the look and feel of the café to be individual and unique, as well as to work well in the surrounding landscape.

The current leaseholders were well informed of the process and had feedback from users prompted by the posting of the questionnaire on social media had been passed back to them.

By law, the lease length of the Cafés was restricted to three years and it was felt this did not encourage the occupier to invest in the establishment. The Corporation had sought to tackle this issue in the Open Spaces Bill currently progressing through parliament. The Bill would provide for leases of 15 years (21 years in special circumstances), but was not due to complete the parliamentary process for a further two years. It was therefore anticipated that a one year lease extension would be offered to the present occupier of the café, after which a tendering exercise would be undertaken for a three year lease (with longer leases to be offered subsequently). Members queried whether the 3 year lease could be offered with the inducement of first refusal on the longer lease.

Members discussed the reasons why the first procurement exercise had not been successful. It was felt that the initial process had failed to identify questions that would demonstrate the provider's ability to recognise the social aspect of the café. The consultation exercise would seek to address this with tendering questions formed by the results of the consultation process. It was also anticipated that members of community groups would form part of the assessment panels to further assist in capturing local desire. The Committee further discussed the specific reasons behind the decision of Minkies to withdraw from the Queen's Park Café. Members felt that the costs associated with the TUPE arrangements could be seen as prohibitive for a small local business; however the Superintendent assured the Committee that the costs were reasonable and viable for the establishment. The extension of the lease under the Open Spaces Bill would also help small businesses to spread the cost and risk associated with the TUPE arrangements.

In response to Members concerns that large franchises could win the procurement process again, the Chairman reported that, were this to be the case, the Committee could have confidence that the decision had involved local residents and the process had addressed the issues that had been the cause of protest.

The Superintendent summarised the governance process for the re-procurement of the café lease:

- The consultation process would be concluded and a draft report on the findings would be submitted to Members by email for comment.
- The final report would be completed and a further meeting of the group would be held.
- Following this, a report on the lease options for the café, including performance indicators and service standards for the interim arrangements, would be submitted to the Management Committee in May.
- The tendering exercise would then be undertaken.

3. REVIEW OF FINAL DESIGNS FOR THE QUEEN'S PARK PLAYGROUND SAND PIT

The Group received a presentation from Erect Architects on the plans to renovate the sandpit and surrounding play area. It was reported that Erect Architects specialised in urban play and had completed significant designs at Kilburn Park and the Olympic Park. It was reported there was a lack of enthusiasm for sand in urban play and many sand pits had been replaced due to the ongoing maintenance costs associated. The architects saw the sandpit at the park as an asset and were excited to work with it.

A consultation event had been conducted and all the initial designs presented had all been positively received. Members discussed the results in detail and the following points were noted:

- The sand was very popular and seen as a safe place to play, however a few users had felt that the sand was dirty, and had noted that the underlying membrane was on show. Sand also leaked onto the path.
- Users liked the size of the sandpit area.
- The play vehicles were a popular offering.
- Direct access to the toilets was strongly supported.
- Users liked that the play area had only one entrance.
- The water play design was very popular.

The architects had a budget of £50,000, and the services of staff from the Open Spaces team to assist with the labour. The design presented had incorporated as many of the positive elements from the consultation process as possible within this budget. Water play, mounds, textures, tunnels and slides were included. The triangular grass section would be developed to include a toddlers swing and additional picnic seating. A horse and cart and tractor would replace the play vehicles. The access to the toilets that had been requested in the consultation exercise did not form part of the initial refurbishment project, but would be scoped by the surveyors department as a separate project in February.

Members queried the maintenance regime for the sand and whether it was treated to maintain hygiene. It was confirmed the sand was regularly monitored and raked, and sprayed with diluted bleach once a month. In response to a further query from a Member, it was confirmed that the labour had been anticipated in the work programme, and that it provided a good opportunity for staff from outside Queen's Park to experience a new open space and work in a different team.

It was confirmed that the waterplay area would include a large drain away, and it was anticipated that the wet sand and the natural play border would prevent the sand from escaping from its designated areas.

Members discussed the timescale of the project, and there was agreement that the works should take place as soon as possible so as to be open in time for the May half term. It was asked that the fixed play equipment that was to be replaced be offered for sale to local schools and playgroups.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

5. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was noted to be **14 June 2017**.

The meeting ended at 19:00

Chairman

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