



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust Committee Minutes

Wednesday 11 December 2013

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Joe Carlebach (Chair) and Elaine Chumnerly

Other Councillors:

Officers: Craig Bowdery (Principal Committee Coordinator), Tom Cardis (Policy and Projects Officer), Mark Jones (Director for Finance & Resources), Barrie Maclaurin (Parks and Open Spaces Manager) and David Page (Director of Safer Neighbourhoods)

8. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2013 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Andrew Brown.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests. However Cllr Carlebach noted that he was ward member for the ward where Olympia was based (Avonmore & Brook Green), and this was referenced in the Manager's Report.

11. MANAGER'S REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Director of Finance & Resources and the Director for Safer Neighbourhoods on the management activity carried out since the previous meeting. The report covered the following areas:

The Scheme of Delegation

The Committee discussed the proposed scheme of delegation that would allow decisions to be taken outside of meetings when circumstances required a speedy decision. Members stated that they wanted to ensure there was transparency regarding expenditure and agreed that any decisions should be reported to the next Committee meeting and publicised. Some members expressed the view that if a decision was required outside of a meeting, technology allowed for the whole Committee to be consulted prior to decisions being taken. The Committee agreed that when opportunities for revenue raising activity arose, members should be consulted electronically.

Appointment of Auditors

It was agreed that KPMG should be appointed as auditor of the Trust's accounts for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Open Air Events

Officers explained the imperative for the Trust to generate revenue to secure its long-term financial viability, and described plans for an open air music festival, aimed at families. Members noted that the festival was a good opportunity for the Trust and agreed that prior to any event there would need to be a robust traffic management plan, noise pollution plan and other strategies for dealing with rubbish and general crowd control. Officers assured the Committee that these would all be in place. Members also asked whether there might be an opportunity for a presence at the event for either a Friends of Wormwood Scrubs or a Trust stand. It was also agreed that any festival should seek to enhance local employment opportunities as well. It was agreed that an update on the festival would be presented at the next meeting.

The Chairman also recorded his thanks on behalf of the Trust to the Parks Police and Council officers for their work moving-on a group of travellers recently. The travellers had been hostile and aggressive but the situation was handled well. The Committee also recorded its thanks to the Council for meeting the security costs of approximately £12,000.

Renting lorry parking spaces to Olympia

Officers described plans to rent lorry parking spaces on the Red Gra to Olympia. They acknowledged the potential for an adverse impact on local residents but noted the potential to raise revenue while also improving the security of the site and preventing the area from being used by travellers. Members noted that Olympia had a good record of mitigating against impacts such as noise. Members agreed that the Director for Safer Neighbourhoods should enter into an agreement with Olympia and that residents in Woodmans Mews should be written to to inform them of the plans.

Charging the Metropolitan Police for parking for the Notting Hill Carnival

The Committee agreed that an increasing parking fee schedule for the use of Scrubs land by the Police should be negotiated.

Review Licence for the Car Park with the Hospital

The Committee noted that the Imperial healthcare trust had gone on record as stating it was in a good position financially, and therefore an increased parking charge should be negotiated.

Introduction of parking charges at weekends

Officers explained that there were no firm plans to introduce parking charges at weekends, but that it was being explored. An issue would be the potential for an adverse impact on the surrounding residential streets that could see visitors parking on local streets rather than in the Trust's car park. It was agreed that officers should discuss the issue in greater detail with parking officers from the Council and report back to the Committee with more detailed plans later. Members of the public stated that they were aware of instances when visitors hadn't paid to park but had not been given a parking ticket. Officers undertook to speak with the Council's parking wardens regarding the frequency of their patrols.

The Committee also identified that the prison car park was regularly empty and questioned whether there was potential for the spaces to be made available for visitors or residents. Similarly the roads were often extremely congested with parked vehicles so that buses sometimes had difficulty passing. Officers explained that many of the issues were the responsibility of the Council rather than the Trust, but undertook to investigate the issue with the prison and with Council parking officers.

Community Safety update

The Committee noted the figures on recorded crime for 2011/12 to 2013/14 and welcomed the news that crime was rare on the Scrubs and that it was a generally safe place for visitors.

Sale of Tied Cottage

The Committee discussed the possibility of exploring the options to sell the tied cottage and agreed that more detailed proposals would be considered at the March meeting.

Grounds Maintenance

Officers informed the Committee that work was ongoing to improve the biodiversity of the Scrubs and that two schools were running 'Forest Schools' on the site. The Committee agreed that opportunities to expand the Forest School programme wider should be explored, as they had proven to be successful for the children and further revenue could be generated.

Members of the public raised concerns that the agreed maintenance by voluntary groups was sometimes not being completed, which in their view gave the Scrubs a

run down appearance. Officers agreed that ensuring volunteers delivered on their agreed work was an issue and undertook to investigate how this could be addressed. It was agreed that an annual park management plan would be prepared and shared with the public and the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs so that all work was scheduled and could be tracked.

The potential impact of HS2

The Committee was informed that the Chairman had written to TfL, the GLA and the Mayor's Office to highlight the importance of the Scrubs and to request that the Trust be consulted separately to the Council on any proposals for the HS2/Crossrail hub at Old Oak Common. The Chairman also informed the meeting that he had not yet received a response. Members of the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs explained that they had held a meeting with all interested parties in November, when they were informed that TfL were considering a number of different proposals, but that TfL's current preferred option included going across part of the Scrubs land. A further meeting was to take place in January 2014 on a date to be confirmed, and Committee members were invited to attend. The representatives of the Friends also explained that given the number of options being considered, they felt that it would be important to receive independent advice on the proposals and any other possibilities that TfL were not consulting on. The Friends therefore wished to hire a consultant engineer to prepare a report, at a cost of approximately £2-3,000, and asked if the Trust was in a position to help fund the report. The Chairman agreed to consider the suggestion. Officers explained that the Council had secured some money to research alternative options and to get an independent evaluation of the proposals put forward by TfL.

The Committee discussed the expected timetable for the High Speed Rail 2 Bill that was currently going through Parliament. The Bill had had its first reading and was now due to have its second reading in the House in March 2014, to go to the Committee Reading in April or May. After this the Bill would be considered by the House of Lords, when it was still possible to petition for amendments.

The Committee agreed that representatives from TfL, HS2 and the Mayor's Office should be invited to the Committee meeting in March 2014, when the meeting would be dedicated to considering the proposals and their impact on the Scrubs.

The Friends also highlighted that the Environmental Statement that was currently out for consultation included schemes for ecological enhancement. These included creating a stretch of wetland in the Scrubs in an area that seemed to be entirely unsuitable as it was on a gradient and out of keeping with the rest of the Scrubs. Officers explained that the Council was also concerned about this proposal and that it would be opposing it if it were not removed. The Chairman agreed to write to HS2 to find out where the idea came from and how it could be justified.

RESOLVED –

The Committee agreed:

- i) that the Scheme of Delegation set out in the report be approved, until the January 2014 meeting of Full Council, when the alternative arrangements proposed can be considered;

- ii) that KPMG be appointed as auditors for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 accounts;
- iii) that the Director for Safer Neighbourhoods should enter into an agreement with Earls Court and Olympia Limited in consultation with the Committee Chair, to allow occasional vehicle parking on the 'Red Gra' area; and
- iv) To delegate to the Chairman the power to decide whether it would be in the interests of the Trust to open negotiations with the hospital about the terms of the licence to use the car park.

12. FINANCIAL FORECAST 2013/14

The Committee received a report from the Director for Finance & Resources on the forecast for the Trust's finances in 2013/14. It was noted that the receipts from parking were lower than expected and that without the revenue-raising activity discussed earlier in the agenda, the Trust's reserves would not last beyond next year.

Members asked whether there was potential for other London boroughs to contribute to the Trust's running costs, especially as the Wormwood Scrubs Act states that the land is for use by all Londoners. It was highlighted that in the current financial climate councils were unlikely to have funds available, although the City of London funded some parks outside of its boundaries, which officers undertook to investigate further.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were agreed as:

- Wednesday 12th March 2014
- Wednesday 2nd July 2014 (to be held at the Wormwood Scrubs Community Centre)
- Wednesday 24th September 2014
- Wednesday 10th December 2014

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.33 pm

Chairman

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