



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust Committee Minutes

Tuesday 9 December 2014

PRESENT

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

Officers: David Page (Director for Safer Neighbourhoods), Mark Jones (Director of Finance and Resources, ELRS), Ian Ross (Leisure Services Manager), Jackie Simkins (Principle Planning Projects Officer)

13. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd September be approved as an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

16. MANAGER'S REPORT

The committee received a report from the Director for Safer Neighbourhoods and the Director for Finance and Resources updating the committee on management activity carried out since the last meeting.

The report covered the following areas:

HS2 Wetland Mitigation

It was reported that HS2 were flexible in considering alternatives to the proposal of a wetland habitat on the Scrubs. They had made it clear, however, that any proposals for a mitigation scheme had to replace lost habitat from the HS2 scheme like for like. A meeting had taken place between officers where ideas had been discussed for proposals to make to HS2 on ways that the Scrubs could be improved that would not destroy the nature of the area. From this a walk around the Scrubs with representatives from HS2 had been proposed. It was felt clarification was needed over the type of habitat that would need replacing and what the Scrubs would have to provide. Officers invited both members and Friends to join in the walk around and agreed to circulate the dates.

Action: Jackie Simkins

Members felt that officers were allowing HS2 to dictate the terms of the mitigation. Care needed be taken to ensure that the wetland proposal did not go ahead without the approval of the trust and a clear message needed to be sent. It was felt that the Trust should tell HS2 to provide works that they thought more beneficial to the Scrubs, for example, demolishing the Artillery Wall. Members enquired why the habitat mitigation had to go ahead on the Scrubs at all, when works to the area could actually prove detrimental.

It was asked whether there was a legal provision that could force the Trust to accept the mitigation proposal. Officers agreed to find out if there were a risk of this and legal advice would be sought.

Action: Jackie Simkins

It was reported that the ecology centre that had been proposed by the Trust as an alternative form of mitigation would not count as such by HS2, as it did not replace habitat like for like. There was also concern amongst officers that the Authority would have had to have paid for the running costs of the centre. It was agreed that the removal of the Artillery wall remained the best option, not only having an environmental benefit but a practical one, as it also solved the problem of the school coaches.

TfL Overground Options Update

Officers reported that the consultation period on the three Overground options had now ended. Both the Trust and the Authority had written in support of Option C and against Options A and B.

There had been 1900 responses to the survey in total. 85% of those responses were in support of the scheme as a whole, 80% felt that it should be incorporated into the HS2 scheme and 75% said they were likely to use the scheme. Of the stakeholders, Hammersmith, Brent, RBKC and Hounslow had all supported Option C. Ealing had supported both A and C. QPR's response was still unknown. Overall Options A and C had had similar levels of support, with a slightly higher level for Option A, although with a stronger level of disagreement against Option A. It was felt that TfL were themselves leaning towards Option C.

Members requested that the Trust ask a lawyer to look at the consultation process in detail to see if it could be challenged if TfL decided to opt for Option A.

It was reported that the result of the consultation would be announced early next year. Officers agreed to keep Members informed.

Action: Jackie Simkins

The Friends of Wormwood Scrubs reported that they had recently met with TfL, and a subsequent meeting had been arranged for February. TfL had reported that they would be analysing the results of the consultation in detail and that there was a lot of work to be done before the announcement was made. It was thought by some members of the committee that the results may be delayed until after the general election in May.

Mayoral Development Corporation

A letter had been sent on behalf of the Trust opposing the inclusion of the Scrubs in the MDC boundary. Officers reported that there had been a re-consultation process that had resulted in a new boundary being drawn that did not include the Linford Christie Stadium but did still include the Scrubs. It was reported that the next stage of the process would be on the 17th December, when the Mayor would take questions about the setting up of the MDC at Old Oak Common and Park Royal from the London Assembly. Victoria Hills, Director of the MDC was hoping to meet with the Trust prior to that date to discuss their concerns.

The Friends of Wormwood Scrubs updated the Trust on a meeting they had held with representatives of the MDC, who had seen the inclusion of the Scrubs in the zone as positive. The MDC had reported that the only planned change to the Scrubs would be the addition of an access gate. Officers reported hearing similar things from the MDC, who had informed them that any improvements would be made in accordance with the act protecting the land.

The Friends felt that the inclusion of the Scrubs within the MDC was unnecessary if, as they said, they were happy for the Trust to remain the manager of the land. It was reported that the MDC felt that the inclusion of the Scrubs would support the larger development that would be taking place.

Officers advised the Trust that they had only been given a week to respond to a Development Infrastructure Funding (DIF) Study that had been circulated by the MDC. The report detailed that substantial funds had been set aside for the Scrubs. The draft study also assumed the Scrubs would provide sports facilities to support the new schools that were planned for the area and provide amenity space for both new and existing communities. Victoria Mills from the MDC had requested a meeting with Cllr Harcourt to discuss the plans. It was agreed that she should visit the Authority rather than Cllr Harcourt go to the GLC.

Officers reported that a public consultation had been carried out in June 2013 on the Old Oak Vision that had received a large response in favour of leaving the Scrubs as they were. Cllr Harcourt requested this information in preparation for his meeting with Victoria Mills.

Action: Jackie Simkins

The Chair agreed to update Members following the meeting.

Action: Cllr Harcourt

The Friends of Wormwood Scrubs notified Members that they had encountered many people who were not in favour of keeping the Scrubs as it was. The Friends felt the Trust should demonstrate to these people that there are already a lot of facilities and that the Scrubs did cater for a wide range of people. The issue was how to make people aware of what was on offer. They did not want the Scrubs to be damned by the MDC.

Members felt that the Trust needed to listen to resident's suggestions about how to improve the Scrubs, but also that any works should not compromise the character of the area. The space was not a park and should not be treated as such, although this did not mean that facilities could not be improved.

Officers explained that they were pushing for an area of open space to be included in the MDC proposals north of the canal, to reduce the pressure on the Scrubs. The Chair stressed that this planned open space should not include the existing nature reserve in the area. Officers agreed to investigate if this were the case.

Action: David Page

The Friends asked whether there was now any route left to oppose the inclusion of the Scrubs in the MDC. Officers advised that it was now down to the London Assembly to decide on the boundary. Members felt that a letter should be drafted laying out the principles of the Trust which could be signed by the Chair and sent to all London Assembly Members.

Live Nation

Officers briefed the committee on the proposal for an event on the Scrubs run by 'Live Nation', a company who were seen as both experienced and professional. Officers reported that the police had been onside for the planned event and that they had been consulted at an early stage. However, for commercial reasons Live Nation had decided that the event was no longer viable for 2015 as originally planned, but would instead be taking place in 2016. They hoped to pass all legal hurdles for the event by early 2015 to leave plenty of time for the planning and logistics stage. It was reported that they had already completed a transport survey on the site. Officers warned members that the process would be moving very quickly between this meeting of the Trust and the one scheduled for March.

Members initial feelings were that the event was a big step up from the Good Times event that had originally been planned for the next summer. However it was agreed that the organisers did seem to be both trustworthy and professional. It was agreed that the employment of local people as ushers and stewards etc. should be a requisite to granting them permission to use the Scrubs. There was concern over the potential impact on residents. It was agreed that residents needed to be brought on-board with the event at an early date, and that unlike the Good Times event people needed to be prepared for it.

Officers reported that due to the year's delay there may be an application from the organisers to make it more than a single day event. It was felt that the event could make big changes to the finances of the Trust.

The Friends of Wormwood Scrubs felt that the scale of the event needed to be carefully considered.

Sports Facilities

It was reported that, as more improvements were still needed on the Linford Christie Stadium, a formal opening would not be taking place in the near future. Members asked whether the outdoor gym next to the stadium would be included in the improvement works and it was confirmed that it was not currently included in the development. Officers agreed to look into funding for improvements to the gym.

Action: Ian Ross, David Page

Properties

The plans for the car park were going ahead as anticipated. The hospital's board had approved the increase in price. Members asked that the contract be finalised and signed by the end of December, to avoid any problems the hospital may have in the New Year.

Action: David Page, Mark Jones

On the issue of the ownership of Little Wormwood Scrubs it was confirmed that although the area was owned by the Council it was not within the boundaries of the Trust. The area had been leased to Kensington and Chelsea for a number of years. Members queried why that was the case and officers agreed to investigate as well as provide a briefing on the background of the area, the history of the lease and each party's responsibilities.

Action: David Page, Mark Jones

Community Safety

A quote had been received for the replacement of the barrier on Woodman's Mews. There was a question as to whether simply repairing the barrier would fix the problem in the long term as it was thought likely that the issue could relate to the increase in heavy vehicles on the road. The cost to replace the whole barrier however could be around £30,000. Officers agreed to look into the issue and finalise a quote.

Action: David Page, Mark Jones

Grounds Maintenance

It had been agreed that a bench in memory of Stephanie Gray should be placed on the Scrubs. The Friends asked that a simple plaque be placed on an existing bench and agreed to consult with officers about the wording of the plaque and the placement of the bench.

Quadron Contract

It was confirmed that the Quadron contract expired in March 2021.

Finance

The financial forecast had been revised in light of the Good Times event being cancelled. There would be a deficit of £35,000. The impact of the car parking charge changes was significant, with a recurring increase of £86,000, and a one-off payment of £259,000. However resurfacing of the car park would cost £200,000 leaving a benefit of £59,000 from the arrears on the contract.

Members felt that the committee would have greater weight in negotiations with outside bodies if it could show that its finances were in profit or breakeven. It was asked that officers look into the possibility of splitting the £200,000 cost of resurfacing the car park over the next two years to help facilitate this. It was also asked whether this sum could be reduced overall.

Action: Mark Jones

The cash balance was forecast to be £297,000 at year end.

Other Business

Officers asked that the requested walk around of the Scrubs to look at grass cutting and the tour of Linford Christie stadium be combined. Members agreed and a date was set for 10am on the 10th January.

Members requested that a briefing be produced detailing the availability of Section 106 funding for the Scrubs. It was asked that Sue Spiller be invited to the next meeting of the Trust to discuss how to approach possible donors. It was thought that there may be other organisations the Trust could apply to for funding.

17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting is provisionally set for the 4th March

Meeting started: 7:00pm
Meeting ended: 8:05

Chair

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