



**Wednesday 30 November 2016
7.30 – 9.30 pm**

Islington Town Hall – Upper Street – Committee Room 1

MINUTES

Chair	Councillor Caroline Russell	Highbury East ward
Councillors	Councillor Aysegul Erdogan	Highbury East ward
	Councillor Osh Gantly	Highbury East ward
Council officers	Martijn Cooijmans	Highbury East Link Officer / Team Leader – Planning & Projects
	James Blythe	Partnership Support Officer
	Andrew Bedford	LBI Parks & Open Spaces Manager
	Jerry Gutwin	LBI Parks Services Manager
	Lara Ellington-Brown	LBI Projects Officer
Other	Gareth Edwards	Hochtief
	Lara Leporati	TfL
	Jess Taylor	

1. Welcome and introductions

Cllr Russell welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Cllr Gantly and Cllr Erdogan. She also thanked officers and representatives of TfL and Hochtief for attending the meeting.

2. Minutes and matters arising

There being no issues with the minutes, Cllr Russell signed them as an accurate record of the meeting held on 13 September 2016.

3. Highbury Corner Bridge works

The team from TfL updated residents on current progress in the enabling works for the Highbury Corner bridge replacement. The current utility diversion works, by BT, would be finished by Christmas 2016, and then Skanska would begin work on the diversion of water,

gas and power in January 2017. The current target is for them to finish by the end of 2017, and for the final completion of the whole project in the first couple of months of 2018.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- TfL are clear that lessons have been learned from the issues for pedestrian access that occurred with the works in the summer of 2016, ahead of future restrictions on access to Highbury & Islington Station in spring and early summer 2017.
- The closure of the road across Highbury Fields will continue for the duration of the programme of works as it houses the facilities for the staff involved. TfL are re-surfacing Church Path as a partial apology for the disruption.
- Officers would circulate the link to the project website with the minutes. *[POST-MEETING NOTE: The website is <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/highbury-and-islington?cid=highbury-corner>.]*
- Network Rail owns the empty plot next to the Marie Curie building, and that section of the bridge cannot be replaced without demolishing the Marie Curie building.
- The re-design of the roundabout, a separate project, is on hold pending the new Mayor of London's business plan for transport, which is due to be published in the next few weeks.
- The old station building on the other side from the current station is now full of equipment for the Victoria Line and cannot be re-opened.

4. Events at Highbury Fields

Cllr Russell introduced the item, saying that the purpose of this discussion was for residents to give their input on the kind of events they want to see on Highbury Fields.

Jerry Gutwin from the council's parks management team spoke briefly on the council's current priorities for the parks. The council had set the service a challenging income generation target, as part of the approach the council was taking to the current financial challenge.

He explained that there were discussions underway currently among elected members about the possibility for funfairs across the borough. Highbury Fields has a premises licence, but currently not an alcohol licence. The council now intends to seek a licence for alcohol to generate income but also to ensure it has appropriate control over all sales of alcohol on the Fields. In terms of events, the council's current thinking is to have a repeat of the Go Islington event next summer, but officers were also open to ideas from residents.

The following ideas from residents were noted:

- Outdoor film and theatre
- Concerts
- Sports events
- Literary, folk, food or more general community festival
- In general, more free community events
- Fireworks festival
- Anniversary event in 2024

- The dog-free zones would be an ideal site for an ice rink.
- Spiegel tent as a pre-Edinburgh Fringe event

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The **funfair** held on the Fields brought in a significant amount of income, but on the other hand was very expensive for families with children. The funfair had also arrived three days before opening this year, which had caused disruption to residents.
- There was anxiety about very large events and in particular if the council were to go down the route of Finsbury Park and host an event like a **music festival**, which brought significant anti-social behaviour.
- Some areas of the Fields could not be used for events because of **tree roots**.
- The Fields have no fence around them and there are limited mechanisms for **controlling entry and exit** from the Fields.
- School and other **informal events** often take place and may or may not be classified by the council as a formal event, depending on the impact on other residents.
- **Abuse of the barbecuing privilege** by large-scale commercial barbecuers was not tolerated by the council and the anti-social behaviour service would close down such events.
- Events like **Go Islington** needed to be better publicised as on occasion the sports coaches had not had anyone to coach. The council generally should be better at communicating with residents, through posters on the Fields, in schools, at leisure centres, Twitter and Facebook.
- Some residents felt that **barbecues** should be suspended on that day as the smoke had hindered some young people getting involved in the event. Councillors suggested in response that Cllr Webbe, Executive Member for Environment and Transport, should be invited to a future meeting to discuss the subject.
- A resident said **football boots** did significant damage to the Fields when the weather has been bad during the winter. They were keen for the council to ban football boots, though other residents felt that it was not an issue and were keen for families to play sports on the Fields. Enforcement is a major challenge for the council, but officers are happy to receive reports if the grass is being damaged and will keep the matter under review.

Councillors thanked officers for presenting and encouraged residents who had further ideas about events to bring those forward by emailing ward councillors.

5. Update on new park buildings

Cllr Russell introduced the item, saying that in 2007 a vision for Highbury Fields had been agreed, in which it had been proposed as a priority to refurbish the buildings on the Fields to the benefit of park users and staff working in them.

Lara Ellington-Brown, the Project Officer, opened the discussion by saying that officers had not really begun work properly on this project, but were committed to close engagement with the Ward Partnership. Lara herself would be attending all future meetings of the Ward Partnership. In terms of getting the project underway, the following had been done:

- A Steering Group had been established including ward councillors, relevant officers and representatives of community groups.
- The first task for that Group had been to develop a strategic brief for architects to begin consultation and engagement about potential ideas.
- Once the initial consultation and engagement phase had been completed, some initial proposals would be put forward for an extended and dynamic consultation, in which residents would be encouraged to contribute proactively.
- The council has not developed a plan for the buildings on the Fields in the strategic brief, but has just set out some aspirations.
- Lara would be in regular contact with residents through the Ward Partnership mailing list, and was happy for residents to get in touch with her by email (Lara Ellington-Brown, lara.ellington-brown@islington.gov.uk).

In discussion, the following points were made:

- A resident suggested that the council had already made a decision to have a single building. Cllr Gantly clarified that such a decision had not actually been made.
- There was significant discussion about the membership of the Steering Group, and councillors clarified that the Children's Services representative on the Group would be proactively engaging the staff of the One O'Clock Club.
- The feasibility study had identified that a single building was likely to be the most cost-effective solution and this was also in line with the vision for Highbury Fields, but no decision had been made as yet and both officers and members were willing for two buildings to be a possibility and to listen actively to responses to the consultation in future about imaginative solutions.
- An individual commented that there would need to be consideration given to appropriate safeguarding arrangements for children using any single building. In response, Cllrs Russell and Gantly reminded those present that this was part of the role of the Children's Services representative on that Steering Group.
- A resident commented that the Ward Partnership meeting in May had heard that the council had committed to a one-building solution.
- A resident asked what the impact of these proposed changes would be on the One O'Clock Club. In response, officers confirmed that they intended to arrange a meeting with the staff of the One O'Clock Club to discuss the future of that service.
- A resident asked that the manager of the One O'Clock Club be added to the Steering Group. Councillors agreed that there should be a further discussion between members and officers about that subject. There was a clear majority in support of the One O'Clock Club in a straw poll, but Cllr Gantly indicated in response that it was generally considered inappropriate for both the provider of a service and the commissioner to sit on such a body, and that it was best for the Early Years officers from the council to be included.

- The feasibility study and draft brief will be made public and circulated to residents by email. Officers clarified that neither document in any way set out that a single building was the solution.
- The maximum permissible size of buildings on the Fields was 266 square meters, based on the current buildings on the Fields (the derelict cottage, the Oasis café and the One O’Clock Club building).
- A resident commented that paper towels were less unsettling for small children than hand dryers.
- A resident commented that any solution needed to provide facilities that were not just focused on aesthetic quality but were designed around the practical needs of the whole community.
- A resident commented that the 2007 vision document had envisaged a thinning out of the number of trees to allow for the creation of a garden.
- In response to a question from a resident, Cllr Russell clarified that the council did not describe the area nearest to Highbury Grove as underused and recognised significant sections of the community made regular use of that area.
- A resident commented that the council had not done enough research into what people wanted from the Fields.
- A resident encouraged the council to clarify in all communications that no decision had yet been taken as to whether the best solution was one or two buildings.
- A resident commented that there was a clear human dimension to this and asked the council to explore what the cost would be of refurbishing the existing sites and to treat this as the primary approach.
- A resident asked the council to involve residents in selecting an architect but officers explained that this would not be possible for practical reasons.
- A resident commented that there were many residents who did not engage with the One O’Clock Club or the café.
- It was noted that the wide range of functions and activities proposed for the single building are what make it such a challenge to implement.

In conclusion, Cllr Russell stated that members had heard clearly a strong set of views about the benefits of having two separate buildings, but it was best not to close down the imaginative thinking of an architect. This would now be a standing item at future meetings of the Ward Partnership, to ensure that there was clear and close engagement for local people as the project progressed.

Cllr Russell then closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their contributions. The date of the next meeting would be circulated as soon as it was agreed.

For further information please email james.blythe@islington.gov.uk or call 0207 527 6833.