

**FRIENDS OF MOUNTSFIELD PARK - PUBLIC MEETING  
7 JULY 2015**

**Present:**

From FOMP Executive: Rory McNally, Rivke John, Ros Phelp, Carrie Blackman, Gareth Conyard.

Also: Cllr Rachel Onikosi, Martin Hyde (Lewisham Council), Angus Fraser (Glendale), various members of FOMP and the wider community

**MINUTES**

1. Everybody was thanked for giving their time to come to the meeting and continue to seek improvements in the Park. In particular, FOMP thanked Cllr Onikosi, Martin Hyde, and Angus Fraser for coming to answer questions.

***Cafe***

2. The FOMP Executive reiterated the request made to the Council in previous meetings that the money set aside last summer (£50k) to develop cafe proposals now be used, and that the Council should run an open procurement process that seeks ideas for how the money could be used to get a range of options for a cafe.
3. Martin Hyde expressed a concern that there might not be sufficient interest in the cafe to justify spending money on a procurement process, especially as the lack of an existing permanent structure to work from might put off potential investors. FOMP suggested that the work undertaken by the Council previously to establish customer demand, which supported two previous attempts to develop a cafe, and the fact that the Council has committed £50k to be available for a new cafe, should mean we press ahead.
4. Concerns were raised about the irregular opening times of the current container unit cafe, noting that this might give a false impression of potential demand if there were instead a well built and open cafe in the park. The impact of the recent assault on a member of staff in the container unit cafe was noted, but Martin Hyde assured the meeting that the current tenants, the Mizens, are intending to open the cafe more regularly over the summer.
5. Martin Hyde confirmed that there is unlikely to be any other funding available from Council funds. Section 106 funding has come to an end and any funding available from the new Community Improvement Levy (CIL) is likely to be vigorously competed for and not available for some time in any event. Notwithstanding this, Martin Hyde agreed to look at whether there is any residual Section 106 funding or forthcoming CIL funding from local property developments (e.g. those on Springbank Road) which could be used in Mountsfield Park.

6. Martin Hyde confirmed that the £50k set aside last summer for the cafe project is still available, although stated he would check where it is currently being held in the Council. Cllr Onikisi reaffirmed her political commitment to seeing the money used on the cafe project. Martin Hyde also confirmed that there is little money left from the contingency on the previous works to develop the community garden and the playground.
7. A range of views were expressed about what a future cafe might look like and how it might operate. It was agreed that an open procurement process would allow the full range of options to be developed so a better comparison can be made in the future, taking into account costs, fundraising needs, specifications, catering provider, business models, and timescales, amongst other things. Martin Hyde suggested that FOMP should make clear what we would like to see from a cafe so that this can be fed into the process.
8. Both Martin Hyde and Cllr Onikosi, in response to questions, confirmed that suppliers and contractors not currently on the Lewisham Council approved list could be used in the construction. They would need to be approved by the Council in due course and have to meet certain legal standards.

#### ACTIONS

- FOMP to draw up a list of proposed requirements for a new cafe by the end of July 2015, to feed into the expressions of interest process.
- Martin Hyde to work with the appropriate people at the Council to develop a pack of information to underpin an expressions of interest process, taking into account the submission from FOMP.
- At the beginning of September, the Council to launch the expressions of interest phase. This will be supported by advertising in local papers. FOMP committed to promoting the process with local cafe owners to help generate interest.
- An open day for those interested in expressing an interest to be held towards the end of September. The Council will lead on the logistics of the day, but FOMP will generate interest amongst the local community, and help to make the day as successful as possible.

#### *Funding*

9. Martin Hyde confirmed that the general funding situation for Lewisham parks in the future remains uncertain, but that the wider push for financial austerity from central Government placed significant pressures on Lewisham's budgets.
10. Martin Hyde and Cllr Onikosi spoke about possible routes for third-party investment in parks across Lewisham, for example via organisations improving and then running tennis facilities. Although FOMP expressed contentment with this approach, they raised a risk that costs for services run by third party providers could rise over time. Cllr Onikosi stated that checks would be put into contracts to guard against this.

11. Martin Hyde also stated that the Council are exploring the opportunities for hiring out parks for events, in order to generate income. Again FOMP expressed contentment, but noted that events would couldn't be too regular, and that they would have to be properly cleared up afterwards. Martin Hyde said revenue raised would go into the general parks budget, but that there may be an option of specific funds being targeted at Mountsfield Park as the host venue. People's Day was discussed in this context, with some expressing the view that a small entrance fee could be charged in order to raise funds for Mountsfield Park. Cllr Onikosi stated that there are no plans to charge a fee at present.
12. The issue of perceived historic underfunding of Mountsfield Park was raised by FOMP and pursued by Cllr Onikosi. Martin Hyde was able to give anecdotal information, but agreed to follow-up with funding figures to provide an accurate picture.

#### ACTION

- Martin Hyde to provide a breakdown of funding for each Lewisham park for each of the last 10 years.
13. The Executive discussed whether FOMP members should be asked to campaign against cuts, but agreed that at the present time we lack sufficient information to understand the implications. Moreover, it was agreed that the Council should be given the opportunity to set out their side of the situation.
  14. Gareth will draft a letter to send to the Council, asking for clarification on how the new arrangements will work, to circulate amongst the Executive so that any additional points can be added.

#### *Other points*

15. Security in the park was discussed, linked to the recent changes to park keep presence. A number of specific incidents were noted, as well as a more general concern about the behaviour of some near the Carswell Road entrance. Angus Fraser suggested that there has been a significant decline in the amount of drug paraphernalia found by Glendale staff in recent times, which was welcomed. Angus Fraser also noted that the presence of mounted police in the Park (as a thoroughfare) should help people to feel secure.
16. The FOMP executive noted ongoing conversations about what facilities might be suitable for older children - a BMX track is on option, a skate park another - although there is no funding in place at present to secure these. The plan to work with Glendale to install an improved Trim Trail in the park could help as it might appeal to older children as well as adults, and will also increase footfall around the Carswell Road entrance.

17. Strong concerns were raised about the current lack of toilet facilities in the Park. Although the long term plan is to address this issue alongside building a new cafe, the current situation is viewed extremely negatively.
18. A number of suggestions were also made for small improvements that could be made relatively cheaply - for example improving the surface of the concrete football pitch (which is irregular and dangerous), improving the gates (which are in need of paint), and improving the basketball hoops. Cllr Onikosi encouraged these sorts of low cost, high impact investments. Martin Hyde committed to looking into it.
19. FOMP again expressed its concerns about the cuts in park keeper service, and questioned whether Mountsfield Park is getting a fair deal given its needs in relation to other parks. Martin Hyde agreed to review the arrangements and consider changes. FOMP welcomed the opportunity to be involved in this review.

#### ACTIONS

- Angus Fraser to provide FOMP with concrete evidence on the decline in drug usage in the Park, so that FOMP can consider ways to spread a positive message.
- FOMP to continue to consider options for providing activities for older children.
- Martin Hyde to look at ways to invest small sums of money into Mountsfield Park to make immediate improvements in areas identified.
- Martin Hyde to review park keep arrangements and engage FOMP.

#### *Forthcoming events*

20. FOMP's presence at People's Day was noted and members encouraged to come and visit the stall. FOMP's planned 'Summer Cookout' was also noted - to be held on Saturday 5 September - with more information promised in due course.