

Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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Briefing of: Councillor Steve Summers

Portfolio: Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces

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1. Sports and Leisure

Improvements to Facilities

The Porchester Centre

- 1.1 Works to improve the existing ground floor area of Bridgefield House (the building adjacent to the Porchester Centre) are progressing and will complete in Spring 2015. The new facility will provide a flexible community space for meetings, training events and activities.

Queen Mother Sports Centre

- 1.2 Works to redevelop the reception, café and health and fitness facilities at Queen Mother Sports Centre are progressing and works will conclude in Spring 2015.

The works will relocate the reception facilities to the ground floor of the building to provide more prominence to the centre from street level and an enhanced experience for customers. The café facilities will be moved to a more central location within the main facility which will provide a more convenient environment for residents and other users. Improvements to the popular health and fitness facilities include new lighting, new flooring and decoration.

Improvement works to the Games Area at Queen's Park Gardens

- 1.3 The improvement works to the 'free to access' Games Area (new fencing, floodlighting and improvements to the surface) and the provision of new outdoor gym equipment at Queen's Park Gardens are progressing well and will complete in the early part of 2015.

Seymour and Queen Mother Sports Centres- Feasibility for Potential Re-Developments

- 1.4 Officers are assessing the possibility of a redevelopment of the Seymour Leisure Centre and Queen Mother Sports Centre sites to provide a major improvement to the sports and leisure facilities. Feasibility assessments have been progressed which have been considered by Members of the Commercial Opportunities Board. The planned phasing of any developments are being considered by Members and more detailed design and feasibility work will be progressed in 2015.

Initiatives and Events

MCC Lords Schools Offer and Launch event

- 1.5 Over 30 schools have now signed up to the new programme, which provides schools with a mix of school based coaching, visits to Lord's cricket ground and match day ticket offers. Discussion with MCC's Community Development Manager and Officers has led to a plan for a more formal launch in early Summer 2015. This will involve all schools participating in the programme and the development of a new community cricket club at Paddington Recreation Ground.

ActiveWestminster Awards

- 1.6 The annual ActiveWestminster Award event took place at Lords Cricket Ground on the 28th November. 350 award nominations were received and awards were provided to 3 finalists in each of the 10 categories. The event was extremely successful and was attended by over 200 people involved in sport and physical activity in Westminster.

Special guests included the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Commonwealth long jumper Jade Johnson and Olympic gold medallist in the skeleton, Amy Williams MBE. Feedback from the event included:

"Thank you and well done for such a fabulous Active Westminster Awards night on Friday".

"A great event on Friday night. Thought it was the best yet, achieving the balance between enjoyable, professional and entertaining event and appropriately profiling all the excellent people and organisations that make things happen in Westminster. So well done to everyone involved for a great job".

Westminster Mile 2015

- 1.7 An ambitious target of over 8,000 participants has been set for the Flagship Westminster Mile event next year with a strong focus on promoting participation from children and families.
- 1.8 Initial discussions with the event sponsors (BUPA) have taken place with a view to expanding the 'activation zone' in Green Park to be much larger and attractive to participants to spend more time at the event during the day. Uptake for the event to date has been extremely positive and remains well ahead of 2014 levels.

Leisure Centre contract re-let

- 1.9 Officers are progressing with the procurement strategy for the sports and leisure facilities contract which is due to commence from 1st July 2016. A 'market engagement day' took place on Friday 10th October with potential bidders for the new contract to discuss a number of 'Key Lines of Enquiry' and the overall procurement strategy is progressing for approval.

The contract forms a key part of the overall sports and leisure offer in Westminster and the portfolio of facilities attract over 3.5 million visits, 16,000 pre-paid members and in excess of £12m income per annum.

2. Libraries and Culture

Queen's Park Library

- 2.1 Internal redecoration works have been completed at Queen's Park Library and it re-opened to the public on 3 November 2014. Some external works and roof repairs are still in progress.

Paddington Children's Library

- 2.2 The Westbourne Baptist Church in partnership with Dolphin Square Foundation are intending to redevelop the church site on Porchester Road, which includes Paddington Children's Library. Library officers have been liaising with the church and the Dolphin Square Foundation throughout the development of the proposal. A new children's library is included within the scheme and the library would occupy a similar footprint to the existing facility within an integrated building. The intention is to provide the library space at peppercorn rent for 99 years.
- 2.3 The proposal is for the library to have its own entrance on Westbourne Park Villas as well as having access via a shared entrance with the church. The developers formally submitted a planning application which was approved by the planning committee on 11 November 2014, subject to the completion of a S.106 agreement. When the development goes ahead it will involve decanting to another site, location yet to be agreed, for approximately two years, as the redevelopment will involve demolition of the site. It is intended that the section 106 agreement will ensure that the library will have a site to move to before moving out of its current location. Legal Services are currently in the process of drafting the S.106 agreement.

Registration service

- 2.4 Limitations on the capacity of the marriage suites at Mayfair library, compared with Old Marylebone Town Hall, have reduced the number and scale of ceremonies Westminster can host. To offset this, a partnership venue able to cater for larger wedding parties to host ceremonies at weekends has been procured. The appointed partner venue is Asia House in New Cavendish Street and the first wedding took place on 6 December 2014. To date 43 bookings have been taken for ceremonies at Asia House.

The first conversions of civil partnership to marriage was on 10 December 2014, following the change in regulations.

Cultural partnerships

- 2.5 A new mural on the back wall of the bottom two floors of Church Street library has been designed by an artist working with the Showroom Gallery and eight different local community groups. The design will be printed on wallpaper and the paper will be installed in January 2015.

3. Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector

City Guides

- 3.1 Quarter 2 was extremely busy for City Guides with them supporting London's major summer events including Ride London, Open House Weekend, Notting Hill Carnival and the Tour de France. The past 6 months have proved to be the busiest in terms of the number of events since the programme was introduced in 2007. In total, 176 City Guides attended events in Quarter 2 with over 850 voluntary hours given over this period.
- 3.2 Officers are developing a new monitoring report which will better display the impact of City Guides on the community and the volunteers who participate. This will be in place by the next quarter. The new monitoring report will include the number of new volunteers at each event and dropout rates to allow us to better measure the popularity of events and engagement with volunteers.

Volunteer Brokerage

- 3.3 The Volunteer Brokerage service continues to over perform its targets for volunteer registrations and placements. Including do-it.org registration, there were 1,122 new volunteer registrations for the second quarter for the final year of the current contract against a target of 712, which has exceeded the target by 57.6%. There have been a total of 258 placements for this quarter, which has exceeded - by 3.2% - the target of 250.

Westminster Advice Service Partnership

- 3.4 In December WASP presented their annual review, client satisfaction survey and external stakeholder survey results to officers, which provided a more detailed understanding of the impact of the service and the needs of Westminster's residents. WASP are currently performing well and are meeting most of their KPI's. However, Migrant Resource Centre's contribution to the quarterly returns for the open access service had dropped significantly on the previous (P3) quarter. Therefore, Migrant Resource Centre changed their key WASP operations personnel back to their P3 arrangement and the Partnership is confident that this will lead to the necessary increase in productivity required. The Partnership has continued to adjust the Families Service and hand over control of appointment bookings to the Children Centre themselves. This approach has led to doubling the appointments made in P3 and P4. The Partnership intends to extend this approach into the Disability Service in the New Year.

Team Westminster Volunteering Strategy Implementation

- 3.5 Work is on-going to implement the commitments contained within the volunteering strategy. The procurement of the Westminster Time Credits service is also progressing as part of a pan London framework against which locally or thematically specific service can be called off. The Council is finished inviting interested organisations to bid for the service and is now issuing items of clarification with bidders before finalising the terms of service delivery.
- 3.6 The specification for a new Volunteering Brokerage service which combines general brokerage with a more targeted service where the Provider will broker a volunteering opportunity based on someone's personal skills and interests is currently being developed by officers.

4. Parks, Open Spaces and Cemeteries

Leicester Square Funfair

- 4.1 The traditional Christmas Funfair in Leicester Square Gardens has now been de-ripped and reinstatement works on the Gardens have commenced. Damage to grass on all four quadrants requires the complete replacement of approximately 2,200 square metres of turf. It is expected that all re-turfing will be completed by the end of January (subject to weather conditions). All associated costs are being fully met by the event organiser.

Tamplin Mews Gardens

- 4.2 Following extensive public consultation led by the Friends of Tamplin Mews Gardens, the design and layout of the new playground has been agreed and orders placed for the new play equipment. It is expected that the new playground will be ready to open by late March. Some additional park benches will also be installed and other minor improvements made. The parks contractor, Continental Landscapes Ltd., will also be arranging bulb planting sessions with local residents and schools during Spring/Summer.

St John's Gardens, Horseferry Road

- 4.3 The failing perimeter wall at St John's Garden (Page Street perimeter wall) is due for rebuilding in Spring 2015. Agreement has been reached with the Tree Officer on the scale of pruning required. The volume of the tree will be reduced by approximately 30% and a new wall with a section of railing will substantially reduce the risk of continued root damage to the new wall section. Parks officers are obtaining the necessary permissions from Planning and Highways Officers for these essential works.

Broadley Street Gardens

- 4.4 The drainage and flood improvement works at Broadley Street Gardens have been completed with full re-instatement. Additional planting and landscaping has also been incorporated into the design.