

Appendix 5

Response of Haringey Friends of Parks Forum and Haringey Federation of Residents Associations to Consultation on Parkforce

22.9.08

To: Paul Ely, Recreation Services, and Parkforce Consultation
cc: Friends of Parks groups, and Residents Associations
Re: Parkforce Proposals consultation

In response to the current Parkforce Review, the joint statement below reflects the joint position of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum and Haringey Federation of Residents Associations.

1. The Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, supported by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations, issued a Statement regarding the original Parkforce proposals on 29th July 2007. Please see Appendix 1 below. The 2 organisations continue to support this Statement. Indeed the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations sent a letter to this effect to all Haringey Councillors on 14th August 2008. Please see Appendix 2 below. The key paras of that original statement (as still agreed by both organisations) are:

In summary, the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum:

- a. are pleased the Council has signed up to the national Parkforce Pledge recognising 'the value of having staff on site during daylight hours in every significant park' across Haringey.*
- b. applaud the hard work and conscientious effort put in by all those employed to work in our parks.*
- c. believe that the current staffing in parks and open spaces is seriously inadequate, being based generally on patrolling teams rather than an adequate number of dedicated on-site staff. It seems that, with some notable exceptions (especially in those parks where there are depots or dedicated on-site staff) much of work done in most of the parks and open spaces tends towards being 'crisis management' and that the current staffing regime is not sustainable.*
- d. are calling for dedicated on-site staffing by Recreation Services in all substantial parks and open spaces. We are convinced that this is a pre-requisite for effective monitoring, management and caretaking, maintenance, community liaison and general security in such spaces. Such staffing is urgently and desperately needed. Dedicated on-site staffing encourage an invaluable sense of 'ownership' and pride from staff and users alike, and provide a means of on-going 'joined-up' on the ground management and liaison (with the public, various stakeholders and any contractors etc).*

e. believe that the Parks Constabulary employed by Recreation Services (involving a very substantial slice of the operational budget, particularly as they are more highly-paid than other staff) are of some, but limited, use in most parks. They are certainly no substitute for dedicated on-site Parks Dept staffing who provide a feeling of security for users whilst at the same time being engaged in a wide range of other essential work. There should be an immediate Review to consider if Parks Constabulary are value for money, and whether some, most or all of the LBH funding for them would be better spent on the on-site staffing everyone agrees is needed. We point out that officers of the Metropolitan Police and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams have a continuing responsibility for any necessary enforcement issues in local parks, just as they have throughout all areas of local neighbourhoods.

f. believe that other incidental activities in parks involving non-Parks Dept staffing (occasional school sports and play workers, cafes, staffed buildings etc) are important, but are no substitute for the dedicated on-site Parks Dept staffing our parks and open spaces need.

g. believe that dedicated on-site staffing is mostly achievable through a re-organisation of existing parks department staffing, accompanied by additional training and upgrading as appropriate.

h. also call, in any event, for greater numbers of operational staffing in the LBH Parks Department.

2. This year, the Forum have discussed the issue at all their meetings. As a result additional points [see para 3, below] can be added to the above Statement.

2a. At the May 2008 meeting of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, the Forum re-iterated their support for the Parkforce proposals. There was some concern expressed over the proposed 'Community Wardens' scheme. It was felt that the last time this was proposed a few years back it collapsed as volunteers became disillusioned that they were seen as para-enforcement patrols. John Morris [for Recreation Services] said that this was definitely not the case this time round, and that he would drop the words 'Community Wardens' in favour of Volunteers if that clarified things... it was an idea being floated to encourage people to get actively involved in a range of volunteering to improve their parks, working with BTCV on various projects. That being the case, no further objections were raised about this aspect of the Parkforce proposals. We call for the name 'Community Wardens' to be replaced by 'Volunteers' or 'Volunteers In Parks'.

2b. The Friends were also keen to ensure the parks dept would continue to make small grants available to them each year for certain activities. John Morris [for Recreation Services] said this would continue, and we want to ensure that this will be the case.

2c. At the July 2008 meeting of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, the Forum again re-iterated their call for resources to be put into more frontline staff and for a

protocol to clarify responsibility (currently unclear) on the role of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Parkforce. The Forum proposed that tel contact numbers of SNT's be displayed on parks noticeboards.

2d. At the September 2008 meeting of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, the Forum again re-iterated their support for the proposals, so long as the maximum number of staff remained on site. The constabulary had not been visible enough.

3. Hence in summary, the following points (i, j, k, and l) should be added to the original Statement of 29th July 2007:

i. The proposed 'Community Wardens' scheme be re-titled as a 'Volunteers' or 'Volunteers In Parks' scheme. It should be about volunteering to help with practical improvements to parks (bulb planting etc) rather than any para-enforcement role. Details should be discussed further with Friends groups and the Forum.

j. The 'small grants' scheme for local Friends groups' activities must be safeguarded

k. All the money saved by the abolition of the Parks Constabulary must go into increased on-site staffing

l. A written protocol must be agreed between LBH Recreation Services and local police (Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Met) to ensure adequate responses when needed in local parks and green spaces. The details of such a protocol must be made available to all Friends groups.

Sincerely

Sally Billot
Acting Chair, Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

and

Dave Morris
Secretary, Haringey Federation of Residents Associations

Appendix 1

**The Haringey Friends of Parks Forum position [as put forward in 2007]
[Also supported by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations]**

A. Haringey Friends of Parks Forum - General Background

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (HFoPF) is the umbrella organisation and network for the thirty local Friends groups of Haringey residents who are active in protecting and improving our parks and open spaces. These have done a huge amount and put in many thousands of hours of volunteer time to develop maintenance and management plans for our parks and green spaces; prevent inappropriate development on the parks; to plant trees, shrubs and flowers, and help create play areas, seating and other facilities; conducting regular walkabouts and producing maintenance updates; and organising activities that encourage local residents to safely use their local open spaces. In some cases these activities have been major events that have attracted thousands of people.

They have all liaised closely with the Council's Parks Service in doing this, and have been key agents in helping to bring in millions of pounds in external funding to improve facilities for local people. They have worked with the Council on achieving Green Flag status for 8 parks and open spaces, the highest number in London.

The Forum itself holds regular well-represented meetings which are supported by the Parks Service, and Parks officers attend them to discuss issues of common concern. At our last meeting, attended by Don Lawson (Head of Parks) and Paul Ely (Parks and Leisure Policy & Development Manager), Don Lawson announced that the Parks Department had just been given the 2007 Better Haringey award for the Best Council Team - he stated that this award was only possible due to the partnership working with Friends groups and the Forum.

The Forum has been effective in putting forward views on common issues to the Council including on planning policies as they affect open spaces, open space standards, and staffing, and in giving support to individual Friends groups when particular threats or opportunities have arisen.

Few London boroughs have such a comprehensive and active network of such Friends groups, and this is a real strength for the people of Haringey. The minutes of Forum meetings can be found on the Council's website:

http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/community_and_leisure/greenspaces/getting_involved/friendsgroups.htm

B. The Parkforce Review

The Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (HFoPF), supported by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations, has engaged in extensive lobbying for more effective staffing in our parks and green spaces over the last 2 or 3 years. Indeed, most of the local Friends groups have each done the same regarding their own local green space.

Hence we are very pleased that LBH Recreation Services have responded to this lobbying by conducting a Parkforce Review of Staffing In Parks over the last 12 months.

Through a Freedom of Information Act request we have ascertained the following figures for staffing levels.

' Current Workforce 2007

<i>Parks Operation</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Arboriculture</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Support Services</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Parks Constabulary</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Parks Support</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Play Fitters</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>107</i>

NB Current Workforce Elements of Recreation will include Business Support 6 and Policy and Development 10, percentages of which will support operational functions for Parks. '

C. Our views

The HFoPF have discussed staffing issues extensively at recent Forum meetings, and in addition have sought the written views of local groups.

In summary, the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum:

- a.** are pleased the Council has signed up to the national Parkforce Pledge recognising *'the value of having staff on site during daylight hours in every significant park'* across Haringey.
- b.** applaud the hard work and conscientious effort put in by all those employed to work in our parks.
- c.** believe that the current staffing in parks and open spaces is seriously inadequate, being based generally on patrolling teams rather than an adequate number of dedicated on-site staff. It seems that, with some notable exceptions (especially in those parks where there are depots or dedicated on-site staff) much of work done in most of the parks and open spaces tends towards being 'crisis management' and that the current staffing regime is not sustainable.
- d.** are calling for dedicated on-site staffing by Recreation Services in all substantial parks and open spaces. We are convinced that this is a pre-requisite for effective monitoring, management and caretaking, maintenance, community liaison and general security in such spaces. Such staffing is urgently and desperately needed. Dedicated on-site staffing encourage an invaluable sense of 'ownership' and pride from staff and users alike, and provide a means of on-going 'joined-up' on the ground management and liaison (with the public, various stakeholders and any contractors etc).

e. believe that the Parks Constabulary employed by Recreation Services (involving a very substantial slice of the operational budget, particularly as they are more highly-paid than other staff) are of some, but limited, use in most parks. They are certainly no substitute for dedicated on-site Parks Dept staffing who provide a feeling of security for users whilst at the same time being engaged in a wide range of other essential work. There should be an immediate Review to consider if Parks Constabulary are value for money, and whether some, most or all of the LBH funding for them would be better spent on the on-site staffing everyone agrees is needed. We point out that officers of the Metropolitan Police and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams have a continuing responsibility for any necessary enforcement issues in local parks, just as they have throughout all areas of local neighbourhoods.

f. believe that other incidental activities in parks involving non-Parks Dept staffing (occasional school sports and play workers, cafes, staffed buildings etc) are important, but are no substitute for the dedicated on-site Parks Dept staffing our parks and open spaces need.

g. believe that dedicated on-site staffing is mostly achievable through a re-organisation of existing parks department staffing, accompanied by additional training and upgrading as appropriate.

h. also call, in any event, for greater numbers of operational staffing in the LBH Parks Department.

Sincerely

Joan Curtis
- on behalf of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Appendix 2

Parkforce Review of Staffing in Haringey's Parks & Open Spaces

[Statement sent to all Cllrs from the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations - 14.8.08]

To all Councillors

The Parkforce proposals for improving staffing in our parks are now out for formal consultation. They were developed in co-operation with the Haringey Friends of Parks

Forum, and supported by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations. They are a step towards what the Forum and Federation have been campaigning for - more on-site staffing in our parks and open spaces. Everyone knows this is desperately needed, and is the main way to ensure our parks are well looked after, better used and safer.

Unfortunately, despite opposition from the Friends Forum, the Council agreed budget cuts for this year and next year which mean even less resources for the already over-stretched Parks Department. However, the savings have largely been made by replacing the work done by the expensive Parks Constabulary (12 officers funded by the Parks Dept to the tune of £438,000 a year, providing on average no more than two duty officers covering the entire borough at any one time) with coverage by the 116 officers in the locally-based Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

If the parkforce proposals do not go through then it is likely we would face the threat of serious cuts in on-site staffing in our parks.

The proposals are summed up by the Council as:

- A new cross-borough Parks Response Unit (managed by the Metropolitan Police) based at Finsbury Park, to support Safer Neighbourhood Teams across the proposed five new parks zones.
- Outreach Officers covering each zone, responsible for delivering a wide variety of programmes and activity across the five Parkforce areas, such as conservation works, organised sports sessions, supervised play and arts activities.
- Increased frontline parks staff (more than 17,000 additional hours per year) to engage with users, Friends Groups and Safer Neighbourhood Teams and provide increased presence at the busiest times of the year.
- Plans to work with the Parks Friends Forum to establish new Parkforce Community Warden volunteering opportunities, aimed at monitoring and improving standards.

If you support this please let the Parks Department know by...

- * Emailing: parks@haringey.gov.uk
- * Filling out a new online survey at www.haringey.gov.uk/parkforce.
- * Requesting a hard copy of the survey by calling Haringey's Parks Service on 020 8489 5662 or e-mailing parks@haringey.gov.uk
- * Questionnaires will be made available at cafes in Finsbury Park, Priory Park, Albert Road Recreation Ground and Bruce Castle Museum.