

**Report for:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Title:** Finsbury Park Events

**Report authorised by:** Barry Francis, Director of Environment & Resident Experience

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**Ward(s) affected:** Harringay

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration.**

- 1.1 This paper provides a summary of the current position regarding:-
- The income generated from major events in Finsbury Park,
  - What that income has been spent on
  - The impact of that funding on other parks.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 In January 2014, the Council approved a new Outdoor Events Policy this revised policy built on an earlier policy for Finsbury Park adopted by the Council in 2002. This earlier policy for Finsbury Park was adopted as a way of funding the increased cost of maintaining the park once it had undergone its planned Heritage Lottery Grant funded restoration.
- 2.2 The Outdoor Events Policy permits the Council to hold five three-day weekends of major events each year. A major event is any event over 10,000 people in attendance. There are no caps on the number of events smaller than 10,000 people in attendance per year. The Council does not permit any major events to be held during the six weeks of the school summer holiday period. There has only been one year where the park hosted five major events and that was 2018. Most other years major events have only taken place on two or three weekends.
- 2.3 The Council holds Finsbury Park under the 1906 Open Spaces Act, this requires the Council to utilise any money raised in the park to defray any costs in maintaining, managing, and improving the park. The money can not be spent outside of the park.

## **3. Income generated**

- 3.1 Since 2012 the Council has generated £8.7m from events, filming, property and associated fees and charges. A break down of the annual income over those 12 years is attached in Appendix A. Of that £8.7m events in the park have contributed £7.4m.
- 3.2 The income has varied year on year both as the popularity of events has increased, but also following the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions during 2020 and 2021. In the three years prior to 2020, the average income from events in the park was £1.1m per annum. In 2022 the first fall year after the pandemic the park also generated £1.1m from events. During 2023 this average will be exceeded with income from events generating approximately £1.27m.

- 3.3 Up until this year all contracts for the hire of Finsbury Park for events have been agreed on an annual basis. This has led to a great deal of uncertainty about the budget available on a year-by-year basis. Earlier this year a five-year contract was approved for two weekends of major events per year. This will provide a base level of income of circa £1m per annum. During 2024 the Council will look to introduce more multi year contracts to give it further income certainty.

#### **4. Spending of the income**

- 4.1 The overall cost of maintaining Finsbury Park in 2022-23 was circa £1.61m. In addition, a further £0.47m was spent improving the park. This total expenditure of £2.08m was funded by £1.31m of income from all sources in the park. The balance of £0.77m being funded by Council revenue or capital expenditure.
- 4.2 There are four key areas of spending of the income generated in the park. The first is to fund the base level of management that all parks in the borough receive. The second area of spend is on an additional level of staffing resources dedicated to Finsbury Park. The third area of spend is the cost of the events team who generate the income and manage the delivery of the events. The fourth area is the money available to reinvest in the park to improve or add new facilities in the park.
- 4.3 Base Level Parks Management – Finsbury Parks management forms part of the wider management of parks in the borough and receives input from a range of shared service delivery e.g. playground maintenance, machinery, grass cutting, The Conservation Volunteers, and other similar services. This cost includes the wider management structure beyond Finsbury Park. This is recharged to the park on the basis of a 14.5% percentage share. 14.5% represents the percentage the Finsbury Park represents within all parks and greenspaces in the borough.
- 4.4 Additional level of staffing – in response to various concerns about the level of maintenance in the park and the need for a greater visible presence the staffing structure in the park has been supplemented to include a dedicated manager, a park ranger, additional gardeners, and cleansing operatives. In total this added a further 11 posts to existing base level of 3 full time staff. Due to uncertainty of future years income to fund these staff the posts have only been temporary. However, following the signing of the five-year agreement with Festival Republic the Council is now able to make these post permanent. Which will allow the staff to benefit from the councils' terms and conditions.
- 4.5 Events Team – The events that are held in the park need to be administered and managed otherwise there would be no events or income. Events are also held in other parks and therefore part of the events team cost is met from other events, but the lions share 93-95% is funded by events in Finsbury Park.
- 4.6 Reinvestment – Circa £1m - £1.1m of all income generated by the park is used to offset these costs. Leaving around £0.2m -£0.3m per annum to reinvest in projects. In addition, when sufficient events income isn't available (e.g. during Covid pandemic) or when the parks needs dictate e.g. new street lighting the Council does supplement the improvements in the park from its own resources.

4.7 Since 2019-20 the Council has invested £1.42m in the park of which £0.82m was from events and £0.6m was from Council capital expenditure. This can be broken down into:-

- £271k - On landscape improvements in the run up to the 150<sup>TH</sup> anniversary
- £805k - On improved play provision in the park, including the Richard Hope Play Space
- £291k - On new street lighting in the park
- £12k - On phase 1 improvements in the Nursery
- £15k - On a toilet refurb (2019)
- £26k - On the initial work on the skateboard project.

In addition, there has been other improvements in the park funded from other sources, such as the CCTV system and the Changing Places Toilet.

4.8 During the 2023/34 financial year the focus for investment has been on the Skate Park project with the friends with smaller pieces of work on finishing up the Richard Hope Play space, the new polytunnels at the nursery, the installation of five air quality monitoring stations in the park and on the Boundary Review project.

4.9 In 2019 the Council undertook a consultation on several issues relating to Finsbury Park. Part of that consultation asked respondents about their priorities for improvements in the park. The table from the consultation report is shown below.

Priority for investment	Selected by	% all respondents
Cleanliness	547	57%
Diversity of wildlife	282	29%
Maintenance of flowers and shrubs	265	28%
Lighting	264	27%
The number and quality of the toilets	245	25%
Litter bins	216	22%
Play areas	191	20%
Youth facilities	140	15%
Lake improvements	126	13%
Improving entrance points	125	13%
Sports facilities	104	11%
Outdoor fitness	99	10%
Community events	93	10%
Improving access for the disabled people	76	8%
Art activities or installations	71	7%
Dog control	59	6%
Seating	57	6%
Other	129	13%

4.10 A similar exercise was conducted when the Outdoor Events Policy was developed in 2013. Given next year we will be five years on again from 2019, it is reasonable for these priorities to be updated through some wider community engagement with residents and stakeholders. Officers understand that the

Friends of the park are currently undertaking some work around their group's priorities and an exercise by the Council can build on this.

## 5. Environmental impact fee

5.1 In addition to the income collected by the Council a separate amount is charged to each event organiser as an Environmental Impact Fee. This income is kept separate and the stakeholders in the park bid for some of the money at the end of each year to support their work in the park. The table below shows the total Environmental Impact Fee collected over the last five years and which organisations have benefited from the additional funding.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
Pedal Power	£10,950	£10,000	£9,600	Affected due to Covid	£3,500	£8,808.19	£42,858
Park Run	£600				£1,000		£1,600
Furthrfield	£10,000	£10,000	£9,600			£6,021.22	£35,621
Edible Landscapes	£9,950	£10,200	£9,600		£3,500	£7,328.69	£40,579
LCSP		£10,000	£9,600				£19,600
Boats	£2,500	£5,000					£7,500
FPSP	£1,000	£5,000	£9,600		£6,000	£5,883.61	£27,484
London Heathside						£6,365.29	£6,365
	35,000	£50,200	£48,000	£0	£14,000	£34,407	

5.2 During 2022/23 the beneficiaries use the funding in the following ways:

- Pedal Power: Costs towards delivery
- Furtherfield: The Interspecies Festival of Finsbury Park
- Edible Landscapes: General running costs and contribution towards a solar panel heat source
- Finsbury Park Sports Partnership: Projects to increase volunteering and biodiversity
- London Heathside: Repairs and improvements to track timing system

5.3 During 2023/24 a total of £38,638 has been collected. The stakeholder groups within the park will get an opportunity to bid for a portion of the money later this year.

## 6. The impact of event funding on other parks

6.1 The impact of using event income to fund the Base Level Parks Management Service in Finsbury Park has meant that savings from other parks have not had to be made and therefore although not directly funded from events income the standard of maintenance in other parks has been able to be maintained and protected.

## 7. Use of Appendices

Appendix A - Summary of expenditure and income.

## **8. Background papers**

2019 Finsbury Park Consultation

[https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/finsbury\\_park\\_consultation\\_review\\_report.pdf](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/finsbury_park_consultation_review_report.pdf)

Outdoor Events Policy 2014

[https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/haringey\\_outdoor\\_events\\_policy.pdf](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/haringey_outdoor_events_policy.pdf)