

Report for: Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Item number: 6

Title: Park hire applications by Live Nation / Festival Republic Ltd to hire Finsbury Park for multi-event weekends

Report

Authorised by: Barry Francis, Corporate Director of Environment and Resident Experience

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Ward(s) affected: Harringay Ward

Report for Key/

Non-Key Decision: Non-Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report seeks a determination of a number of applications made by Festival Republic Ltd (the Applicant) to hire Finsbury Park for a period in June/July every year between 2028 and 2032, to stage two consecutive three-day multi-event weekends.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure is being asked to take the decision in the report as required under the Outdoor Events Policy (the Policy), which was approved by Cabinet on 17th December 2013, and implemented on 7th January 2014.
- 1.3 The applications are required to be determined pursuant to the Council's Outdoor Events Policy.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure is recommended:

- i. To note, that no comments were received from recognised stakeholders of Finsbury Park in response to the event notifications being sent as part of the decision-making process.
- 3.1 Pursuant to Contract Standing Order (CSO) 0.08, to authorise the Corporate Director of Environment and Resident Experience to:
- i. To (1) approve conditional, in-principle agreement to hire Finsbury Park to the Applicant for the events and dates detailed in this report as set out in

paragraph 6.4 and (2) enter into contract to hire Finsbury Park to the Applicant (for the events detailed in this report as set out in paragraph 6.4) provided that the Corporate Director of Environment and Resident Experience is satisfied with the terms of any proposed agreements and permissions.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 Under the terms of the Policy, applications of the type detailed in this report are required to be determined with the prior agreement of the Cabinet Member. It is considered that this decision is non-key because it is (a) not likely to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service of function to which the decision relates; or (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.
- 4.2 With respect to (b) the impact of the proposed decision on communities is not considered to be significant because the area does not comprise an area of two or more wards. And whilst some Finsbury Park events sometimes receive strong local feeling from a selection of the community, there is active engagement and opportunity for stakeholders to feedback. Also, any impacts of the events are not significant and have no lasting effect given the short duration of the events during the year.
- 4.3 If authority is given, then officers will give in-principle agreement to the Applicant for the event applications to progress. The events will then be subject to lengthy discussions with relevant authorities - including Licensing and the Police - before final approval is given.
- 4.4 The rejection of the applications would have implications for the Parks & Climate Action service budget and reduce the opportunity for reinvestment into Finsbury Park (the Park). It would also mean that the wider cultural and economic benefits to the borough were lost.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 In adopting the Policy, the Council established its commitment to using the Park for a limited number of major events each year. Accordingly, the only other alternative option which could be considered would be to reject the applications. That option was rejected, on the grounds that the events did not fall within any of the grounds set out in paragraph 5.3 of the Policy for automatic refusal.

6. Background information

- 6.1 In January 2014, the Council adopted the Policy to recognise the value and benefit that a varied, and well-managed, outdoor events programme can offer the residents of Haringey.
- 6.2 The Policy assists the decision-making process behind building a sustainable and varied programme of events. It also seeks to protect the community and the parks and greenspace infrastructure and minimise or mitigate any negative impacts which events may cause.

- 6.3 Some of these restrictions, as set out at paragraph 5.2.2 of the Policy, specifically relate to the Park to ensure a balance of income generation and that of continued public use of the Park through the busiest summer months is achieved. These restrictions include, but are not limited to, the following:
- *“Major scale events [more than 10,000 attendance] will be ordinarily limited to 5 per year, save where there is demonstrable community support for additional events*
 - *Duration of major scale events will be of 1 – 3 days per event*
 - *No major scale events will take place during the school summer holidays”*
- 6.4 In October 2025, the Council received a number of applications from Festival Republic Ltd (the Applicant) to hire the Park to stage a three-day festival in July and a three-day weekend of multi-events to take place in June/July of each year between 2028 and 2032.
- 6.5 The Policy details the approval process for determining applications. Paragraph 5.2.3. of the Policy requires prior authority for the event to be given by the Cabinet Member before officers give in-principle agreement whenever the following criteria apply:
- *“Expected attendance is over 10,000”*
 - *“Event lasts more than 2 days with 5,000 or more in attendance”*
 - *“Organiser occupies a site for more than 14 days including setup and take down periods”.*
- 6.6 All of the criteria detailed above apply to these applications, hence this referral to the Cabinet Member.
- 6.7 Public events have been taking place in Finsbury Park since it first opened in 1869. In recent years, Finsbury Park has been the prime location for many international music acts, playing to large audiences within the open arena of the Park. This includes the first open-air symphony concert of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1948.
- 6.8 The Applicant has a long and successful history of organising events in the Park since the first Fleadh in 1990. Since then, major international artists including Drake (2015, 2018 & 2025), Liam Gallagher (2018) and Oasis (2002) have played to sell-out audiences.
- 6.9 Save for the impact of Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021, the Wireless Festival weekend has taken place in the Park every year since 2014 and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025. In that time, nearly one and a half million people have enjoyed the event in Finsbury Park. Wireless usually takes place on the first weekend of July. However, on occasion, it has been hosted on the second weekend to avoid a clash with other events taking place in the local area.
- 6.10 In 2023 the Council considered and agreed to a long-term hire of Finsbury Park to the Applicant, securing annual hire until 2027. With this long-term agreement, a further mechanism of review was established to ensure that each season’s

event operation was scrutinised, and an annual improvement plan was agreed for implementation the following year.

- 6.11 It is standard commercial practice that, once a park hire application has been submitted by the Applicant and initially accepted by the Council, tickets go on sale, subject to Cabinet Member approval or contract being in place. The Applicant does this at its own risk.
- 6.12 A second multi-event weekend has also taken place since 2015. In the past, this has included the Community Festival, and headline acts such as Queens of the Stone Age and Liam Gallagher, Jamie T, Pulp and The 1975.
- 6.13 The current proposal seeks to hire the Park to the Applicant to host two consecutive, three-day music festivals. By approving these applications, the disruption to the Park will be shorter than having two separate weekends of events with their own build and break periods.
- 6.14 This approach will reduce the income level received (compared to two separate events) but will allow the Park to generate sufficient income for its basic maintenance, enhanced staffing levels and a reasonable level of investment within the Park.
- 6.15 The Applicant allocates a number of tickets for residents living in the immediate vicinity of Finsbury Park. These are available through a postcode lottery. In 2025, 25% of these tickets were applied for by Haringey residents, 65% by Hackney residents and 10% by Islington residents.
- 6.16 Due consideration as to the effects these events could have on the Park, park users and local residents has been given, with detailed plans in place to ensure public access is maintained to the Park and all Council-managed facilities, whilst ensuring the events provide increased recreational enjoyment within the Park environment.
- 6.17 The Applicant has applied to hire the space known as the Bandstand Field to facilitate the main event area for both weekends of events.
- 6.18 The Bandstand Field is a green expanse of grass, which slopes gently down to the southern boundary of the Park, creating a natural amphitheatre. This main field is encompassed by the internal park carriageway. Part of the carriageway was re-surfaced to motorway standards during the Heritage Lottery Funded restoration of Finsbury Park in 2004 to facilitate heavy, articulated vehicles and it provides easy access to the areas to build the event infrastructure, with minimal need for crossing grass.
- 6.19 In addition to the Bandstand Field, the Applicant will utilise the grass area to the north and south of the tennis courts, the reservoir field and the strip of grass running along the southern perimeter of the Park, along Seven Sisters Road, between Finsbury Gate and Manor House. This is to accommodate attendee and staffing numbers of up to 49,999, as specified under the Applicant's associate company's - Live Nation Music (UK) Music Ltd - Premises Licence conditions. It is, however, the Applicant which will be responsible for managing and staging both of the events in each year which the application refers to.

- 6.20 In preparation of the events detailed within the applications, the Applicant has approached a community-led sports charity, the Finsbury Park Sports Partnership, with a view to hiring the tennis courts in the Park, over the consecutive major event weekends in June/July, to facilitate the placement of toilets. This has previously been agreed and facilitated during the 2022 events. This means that the tennis courts could be closed on event days, plus the day after to allow cleaning to take place, if agreement is reached.
- 6.21 The total area used for these two weekends of events equates to 31% of the Park (32% if the tennis courts are included). The remaining 69%/68% of the Park, and all other facilities, remain open to the public at all times.
- 6.22 The areas used for quieter, informal recreational activity, including all formally laid out horticultural spaces such as the Mackenzie and American Gardens in the northern section of the Park, remain open and accessible to the general public while all major events take place.
- 6.23 The only confirmed data the Council holds on usage figures was collected from people counters temporarily installed on the gates into Finsbury Park between 18th July and 11th September 2016. These show that, on average, nearly 8,000 daily park visits were made. This is one of the Park's busiest times falling during the school summer holidays. No major events are allowed to take place during this time, as set out in the Policy at 5.2.2.
- 6.24 Many of these visits continue while the major events take place, by ensuring that all public facilities managed by the Council (including the ball courts, play areas, cafes and lake) remain open.
- 6.25 It is a condition of hire that way-finding signage is put in place by the Applicant just before it goes on site, during the build and break, and on event days to inform people that facilities remain accessible to the public and which thoroughfares remain open. Work is ongoing each year to improve on previous way-finding signage, improving the park user experience while event infrastructure is on site.
- 6.26 During the build and break for events, thoroughfares are kept open to park users to travel through the Park north to south, east to west.
- 6.27 The main carriageway from the zebra crossing by the lakeside café, down to Finsbury Gate, may occasionally be closed during off-peak times to facilitate the on-going build of the event area. If this happens, pedestrians and cyclists will be re-routed using the path running in parallel with the tennis courts. This would not take place during peak times of the morning and evening rush hour – 5am-9am and 3pm-7pm. This closure has been agreed for previous events, however, was determined not to be needed. The Applicant has requested this flexibility is allowed for future events.
- 6.28 The decision to allow the potential closure of this part of the carriageway has been made after careful consideration, and with the safety of park users at the forefront. The Applicant has facilitated the continued use of the carriageway by pedestrians and cyclists over previous years of hire. This has included segregating pedestrian, cycle and vehicle usage into specific lanes. But, in recent

times, it has become harder to manage this with the increase in numbers, and speed at which cyclists enter this area, often ignoring instruction.

- 6.29 The pathway from Hornsey Wood Tavern Gate through to the central play area remains open during most of the build and break but is closed on event days and the immediate day which follows, to allow the site to be cleared and made safe for the public.
- 6.30 In 2024 and 2025 the path running between Stroud Green and Oxford Road Gates has been closed from 2pm on Wireless event days only. This was a joint decision made between the Police, Council and Festival Republic following anti-social behaviour taking place in the Park in 2023. Pedestrians and cyclists are diverted onto surrounding side roads. Access is maintained for those with tennis court bookings or wanting to use the skate bowl.
- 6.31 During the period that this thoroughfare is closed to the public, alternative routes are made available and publicised to ensure access by regular park users is maintained.
- 6.32 The build and break for the events is carried out in phases, ensuring that as much of the event space as possible is kept open for as long as possible for public access.
- 6.33 A zonal plan of the site is developed by the Applicant, and agreed by officers, showing when each part of the space is due to be closed to public access and then re-opened. This is dependent on build requirements and with the utmost consideration of health and safety.
- 6.34 For the rest days in-between the consecutive event weekends when the site is not being used for events, the Applicant is committed to re-opening as much of the event space as possible for public use. This is only done after assessing health and safety requirements.
- 6.35 Since 2018 a music extravaganza, celebrating the musical talent of Haringey, Hackney and Islington young people, has been hosted on the smaller stage within the event area in the week between the two major event weekends. This is now an annual event, in addition to a second community music event FinsburyFest which has run annually since 2023 and showcases local talent.
- 6.36 Security personnel are stationed by Council-managed play and sports facilities closest to the event area to ensure public access is maintained, and that those attending the major events are signposted to access the main entrance into the event.
- 6.37 All efforts to accommodate the continued use by park user groups during the times of the major events will be made either by finding alternative areas within the Park for them to use, or by offering the use of other park sites for their organised activities.
- 6.38 The Live Nation Music (UK) Premises Licence which will regulate the multi-weekend events requires that all music ceases at 9.30pm on Sunday in consideration of the start of the working week. On Friday and Saturday, the music

stops at 10.30pm. Should an event take place on another weekday the music would also cease at 9:30pm.

- 6.39 It is accepted that, due to the high footfall experienced during events, some short-term damage to the grass will take place. In 2023 the Applicant introduced a new level of grounds protection (in addition to that in front of the main stage) around heavy footfall areas such as bars and toilets which offers both protections to wear but also in wetter weather.
- 6.40 A full programme of grass restoration is undertaken by the Park operatives once all event infrastructure is removed from site and weather conditions allow. As the proposed events take place within a contained 4-week period, this will ensure that the grass has a much longer recovery period.

Consultation Exercise

- 6.41 As part of the approval process, the Policy stipulates the need for consultation on the applications to take place. Paragraph 5.1.6. of the Policy states, *“Consultation will involve all stakeholders, including Friends Groups, Area Parks Managers, Ward Councillors, Cabinet Member for Environment and the members of the Haringey Safety Advisory Group. Other consultees may be added where appropriate to the specific park or open space”*.
- 6.42 In discharging the requirement to consult, officers sent details of the applications to 38 external stakeholder groups by e-mail dated 13th January 2026. Details of the list of consultees appears at Appendix 1 to the report. Stakeholders (including: local resident associations; Hackney and Islington Council officers; park user groups and leaseholders; councillors from 6 adjoining wards including those in Hackney and Islington; internal Council stakeholders including licensing and emergency planning; and statutory bodies including the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Brigade) were given 10 working days to respond.
- 6.43 Of the list of consultees, set out at Appendix 1 none provided any form of response to the event notifications.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 Hosting large and major events within the borough’s parks contributes to supporting the local economy, developing the cultural offer in the borough and provides an opportunity for local people to enjoy these types of events with minimal travel.
- 7.2 The recommendations made will contribute to policy and practice in relation to the Borough Vision 2035 and specifically to the second call to action Thriving Place. The Thriving Place call to action will be supported by providing shared opportunities to come together to celebrate world class musical acts performing locally within the borough. It will support the maximisation of our existing assets, creatively share spaces and further promote and secure finances for our greenspaces that help to support the outcomes for residents.

7.3 In addition this decision supports the Corporate Delivery Plan and contributes to the identified outcomes for a Culturally rich borough the decisions within the report will support progress towards:

- A thriving arts and culture sector supported by the Council's collaborative approach.
- Promoting an ambitious culture programme for Haringey
- An engaged and inclusive approach to cultural participation
- A cultural infrastructure to be proud of.

7.4 The future income secured as part of this decision will help to support the Parks Service and the Council's overall financial position as part of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

8. The Open Spaces Act 1906

8.1 The income generated from these events is for the benefit of the Park itself and is fundamental to keeping it open as a viable facility.

8.2 All income generated through events specifically held in the Park, will be spent in the Park as required under the Open Spaces Act 1906 (the Act). In the first instance, this will assist with all management and maintenance costs associated with running the Park. Any surplus event income derived will be used to make improvements to the Park's infrastructure, as set out in the Outdoor Events Policy at 8.2.5.

8.3 The above said, the Cabinet Member is made aware of the fact that the Council does have a statutory duty under the Act as trustee to hold the land comprising the Park on trust for the public. As such, in coming to a view on the recommendations contained in the report, account has to be taken of the existence and impact of all material circumstances which arise from a decision to grant in-principle approval for the events to take place prior to the Leader coming to a settled view.

8.4 None of the 38 recognised stakeholders have raised any objections to the events being proposed for 2028-2032 inclusive.

9. Statutory Officers' comments

9.1 Finance

This information is exempt and is attached as Part B of this report.

9.2 Legal

9.2.1 The Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in the preparation of this report and makes the following comments.

9.2.2 The law which governs the Council's powers to hire the Park in these circumstances was settled in a High Court challenge for judicial review brought by the Friends of Finsbury Park (the Friends) against the decision to permit the application to stage Wireless 2016 in the Park.

- 9.2.3 In summary, the judge ruled that the provisions of section 44 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890; The Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks and Open Spaces) Act 1967 and section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 – all of which govern the ability to permit entertainment in open spaces such as the Park – “*creates different powers for different places subject to different limitations*”. Accordingly, the judge went on to rule that “*s145 of the 1972 Act, of itself and standing alone, provides the Council with the necessary power to permit Wireless 2016 to take place in the Park*”.
- 9.2.4 The significance of that ruling, was that the restriction placed on the amount of the Park which could be enclosed or set apart to facilitate the event, and the duration for such enclosure as prescribed under the 1890 and 1967 Acts – “*one acre or one tenth of the [Park] whichever is greater*” / “*12 days in any one year, nor four [six in London] consecutive days on any one occasion*” – simply did not apply.
- 9.2.5 The Friends then appealed to the Court of Appeal. However, the appeal was dismissed on 16th November 2017, with all three judges ruling that the High Court judge had correctly identified what the legal power position was.
- 9.2.6. The Friends then sought permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. However, that application was dismissed on 26th June 2018 on the grounds that it “does not raise an arguable point of law”.

The Current Applications

- 9.2.7 During the course of the hearing in the Court of Appeal, the Friends and the Open Spaces Society introduced new representations not made in the High Court, concerning the fact that the Council holds the Park on trust for the enjoyment by the public as an open space pursuant to section 10 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 (the 1906 Act).
- 9.2.8 The Council conceded that the 1906 Act did apply. Accordingly, in coming to a view on the recommendations contained in this report, the Cabinet Member is required to consider whether in light of the duty under the 1906 Act, it would still be reasonable to exercise the power under section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972, to close off part of the Park to facilitate the Wireless Festival and associated events applied for. In so saying, the attendance at music and dance events is itself recreational, and therefore within the statutory trust.
- 9.2.9 Pursuant to the Council’s Contract Standing Order (CSO) 0.08, a decision reserved for Cabinet may be taken by a Cabinet Member with the agreement of the Leader and as such the recommendation in paragraph 3 of the report requesting approval from the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure is in line with the Council’s CSO so long as the Cabinet Member is taking the decision with the agreement of the Leader.
- 9.2.10 Further to paragraph 9.2.9 above and pursuant to the provisions of the Council’s CSO 2.01(c) and CSO 0.08, the recommendations in paragraph 3.2(ii) of the report is in line with the Council’s CSO.

9.2.11 Any decision reached by the Cabinet Member is required to be one which is balanced, rational and in the interests of all park users in terms of an overall assessment of the benefits and detriments of public recreation in relation to different sections or user groups within the community. The analysis of the objections to the events, the comments made by officers on those objections, and the outcome of the EqlA are key to aiding the Leader in the decision-making process. In adopting that approach, the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) sees no legal reasons why the Cabinet Member could not approve the recommendations in this report.

9.3 Equality

9.3.1 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.3.2 An equality impact assessment was completed to accompany the decision in December 2013 to adopt Haringey's Outdoor Events Policy, which governs the assessment of event applications to Finsbury Park. The policy does not permit events where the sole purpose is as a religious act of worship. The impact assessment acknowledged that this restriction could have the effect of discouraging religious or belief organisations from using the park for major worship-based events. However, it reasoned that this restriction could be justified because such religious/belief-based events by their very nature could exclude others who do not share that religion/belief from attending the event or using the park more generally.

9.3.3 The Council's Outdoor Events Policy ensures that event providers operate in accordance with the Equality Act and do not discriminate against groups who share a protected characteristic.

9.3.4 The Policy aims to strike a balance between ensuring that the parks, such as Finsbury Park, can be used as a community asset for all groups to access for the majority of the year, against the need to generate income from hosting major events and for these to contribute to the borough's cultural and leisure offer.

9.3.5 An equality impact assessment has been completed to accompany the Festival Republic Event applications and can be found in Appendix 2. The assessment explores impact on residents in the immediate wards surrounding Finsbury Park:

Stroud Green (LB Haringey), Harringay (LB Haringey), Brownswood (LB Hackney), Finsbury Park (LB Islington) as well as groups who shared protected characteristics.

- 9.3.6 The assessment identifies that children, women with children and people with disabilities will be, to a limited extent, impacted negatively by the proposal, as they are more likely to use the park. However, this needs to be balanced against the identified benefits for the community, improving equality of opportunities and fostering good relations. The Council is taking a number of actions to mitigate the negative impact on specific groups with protected characteristics arising from the events. For example all play and council managed sports facilities will remain open throughout the entire hire period. This is to mitigate the potential impact on women with young children.
- 9.3.7 The Council is committed to working with event organisers to reduce the effects of noise from events on all residents living near the park and will enforce the individual conditions that accompany the event's permission including those related to reducing disruption, number of days (including set up) and maximum event space. In person residents meetings are held for each of the three boroughs on the Saturday and Sunday of each weekend to hear concerns and amend arrangements (where possible) in real time.

10. Use of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – List of Finsbury Park stakeholders who were consulted
- 10.2 Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment: Applications by Festival Republic Ltd to hire Finsbury Park for two multi-event weekends including the Wireless Festival and three days of music concerts each year from 2028 to 2032
- 10.3 Part B – Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

11. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 11.1 Haringey Outdoor Events Policy -
<http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s48887/OEP%20-%20CLEARED%20COVERING%20REPORT.pdf>