

MINUTES OF CABINET MEMBER SIGNING HELD ON THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2026, 1:00PM – 10:20AM 20 MARCH 2026

PRESENT: Councillor Emily Arkell, Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure

In attendance: Sarah Jones, Events & Partnership Manager, Ayshe Simsek, Democratic and Scrutiny Manager, Nazyer Choudhury, Principal Committee Co-Ordinator and Councillor Anna Abela

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Cabinet Member referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was an issue in the notification system resulting in late notification for some stakeholders of the applications. The Council had since been in contact feedback had been received. In order to consider this, the Chair decided to adjourn the meeting until 9:30am on 20 March 2026.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10pm and reconvened at 9:42am on 20 March 2026.

5. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. PARK HIRE APPLICATIONS BY LIVE NATION / FESTIVAL REPUBLIC LTD TO HIRE FINSBURY PARK FOR MULTI-EVENT WEEKENDS

The report sought 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.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure was 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.

The applications were required to be determined pursuant to the Council's Outdoor Events Policy.

The Council received stakeholder feedback from some organisations or groups.

Although feedback had been requested, the Ladder Community Safety Partnership (LCSP), submitted a statement stating that they were unaware of the consultation due to an unfortunate confusion over an email address that had been changed recently. The LCSP felt that it could not provide a response without consulting all its members and felt that therefore the only statements that it could make was that the LCSP could not support or oppose the new contract as members' opinions could not be accurately reflected. It was important to note that the LCSP was a very important stakeholder group and continuing conversations could be held between all parties in the foreseeable future. When the Council entered into the previous five-year agreement, there were issues around income, contract details and the management plan information. The income generation from the events secured the long-term income for the major events detailed in the report. It paid for staffing and maintenance and the park. All the money raised from events went back into the park. The council could not detail contract negotiations but there were break clauses allowances for the hire fee to increase year on year and council would continue to discuss further details of the event management plan (EMP) with the premises user as well as through the Safety Advisory Group.

A response had been received from Edible Landscapes. This is a community organization based in the park. They referred to their concerns which include amplified music (as they found it hard to run their sessions). There was also a significant increase in footfall during the events and there was concern that certain areas of the premises would be damaged, particularly areas maintained by the organisation. There were also concerns regarding the accumulation of waste.

There were mitigations in place. There were limits on the noise and the 50,000 patrons attending the events would be contained within the event site. There would be security and stewards guiding patrons onto the event site and away from other areas to minimise the effect on the premises. Collection and removal of waste and litter was detailed in the EMP and work would be done with the applicant to amend the EMP where required.

The Council had considered the balance between the applicant, patrons of the park and the income generation and cultural activity applicants provided to local residents. The Council worked with the premises users to limit impact on route closures imposed, especially within the premises.

The applicant was already active within the park and had committed to investing in green infrastructure, the applicant had started work on a mains electricity cable which would likely improve the impact on events, particularly in relation to air quality, with fewer vehicles coming in to the area.

The notification process had been scrutinised by the High Court and the Council was confident that it had been through a strong process.

Councillor Dunstall had noted concerns locally about the balance of the benefits and impact on local residents in relation to the events, especially for those living close by. He felt the need for clearer safeguards, especially around late-night activity. He also felt there had been some improvements including reassurance on event boundaries, appropriate levels of security around sensitive areas. He felt the need for strong ecological and restoration commitments and had asked for a review of the outdoor events policy. Some of the mitigations involved clear safeguards within the park hire contract. The Council was committed to working with the public to reduce impact on residents and it was unlikely the Council would permit overnight working. There were conditions included in the contract that needed to be met and the applicant would be held accountable for this. The Council would work with stakeholders and the applicant for changes specifically to improve boundary points and experience for park users. Mitigation measures around ecology were already in place for the sake of wildlife in the area including habitats, trees and legally protected species. There was nothing to suggest any ecology had been affected or that introducing new protections were necessary. There was no plan to review outdoor events policy.

Councillor Anna Abela, present at the signing, wished to state that income generated from outdoor events had led to a significant investment in Finsbury Park. The outdoor events generated approximately £1.2 million annually that was spent entirely in Finsbury Park. This amounted to around a quarter of the Council's parks budget for the entire borough. The events income would cover the park's day-to-day maintenance, as well as various improvements to the Park including new lighting to improve park safety, state-of-the-art play spaces and the Skate Plaza. It also ensured Finsbury Park had 12 dedicated staff members focused on its maintenance and safety.

Councillor Anna Abela further stated that local councils across the country were facing significant financial pressure. Since the Coalition Government from 2010, the Council's funding from Central Government had decreased by £143 million in real terms. The Council had received a financial boost under the Labour Government, but this had not reversed over a decade of austerity, and the budget remained under pressure due to rising demand for adult social care, temporary accommodation and children's services. Anyone arguing for a ban on outdoor events in Finsbury Park needed to consider how they would propose to fund the maintenance and investment that made the park such an iconic part of the borough and which public services would be proposed to be cut or removed. As a councillor for Haringay ward, Councillor Abela stated that she was regularly approached by residents who believed that a different balance should be struck between generating income to fund investment in Finsbury Park and the impact that outdoor events had, particularly on neighbouring residents. The Council should show leadership by having an open, frank and evidence-led conversation with residents to ascertain whether it was striking the balance correctly and whether additional safeguards should be put in place to mitigate some of the impact. By signing the contract ahead of schedule, the Council had missed an opportunity to have this conversation. Councillor Abela stated she was particularly disappointed to hear that one of the two organisations that did not receive the Council's consultation on this application was the Ladder Community Safety Partnership (LCSP), which worked to represent residents' concerns in the ward. This regrettably had happened because the LCSP recently changed its email address, so

the consultation was sent to a mailbox that was no longer being monitored. Although the signing had adjourned by a day to allow the LCSP to make a written submission but, the group adopted collective positions at its monthly in-person meeting and the extra day was not sufficient for the group to reach a position. The Cabinet Member for Parks or the Council's Head of Parks could possibly commit to attending an LCSP meeting in the coming months to discuss any concerns about the contract with LCSP members.

Councillor Abela stated that whilst she would have wished to see more wide-ranging engagement on the issue, she was encouraged that the Cabinet Member Signing was not the end of the conversation as all of the events would be subject to lengthy discussions – particularly with the Council's Licensing team – before final approval was granted. She therefore wished to encourage the Parks and Licensing teams to conduct a fuller consultation with the community in these phases.

Councillor Abela wished to put forward three proposals which were shared by Harringay residents. Firstly, she would encourage the Parks and Licensing teams to consider minimising noise disturbance for local residents and would ask the Council to use its fullest discretion to refuse any future requests from Live Nation to conduct overnight works to complete their build. Secondly, this week, a resident brought to Councillor Abela's attention that the organisers of Glastonbury Festival took a "fallow year" once every five years – a planned respite from the festival to allow the land at Worthy Farm to recover. While it was reassuring that the Council had (upon her encouragement and that of other councillors and activists) conducted two recent ecological impact assessments in Finsbury Park, she would like to urge the Parks team to explore the merits of following a "fallow year" model in the park. Thirdly, as the papers for the signed showed, the Council's Outdoor Events Policy was adopted in 2014, so she would suggest to look at the policy again to ensure it reflected the lessons learned on outdoor events in the past 12 years. After the May local elections, she would encourage the Council to conduct a full review of this policy, drawing upon an in-depth consultation process with residents, community groups and local businesses, to ensure a borough-wide approach to outdoor events struck the right balance between generating local investment and minimising impacts on residents.

In response, the meeting stated that the Council would attend an LCSP meeting. A fallow year was often held on farmland as farms may need to have a fallow year in order to reinvigorate the soil. This was likely the case with the event at Glastonbury, however Finsbury Park was not a farmland, but an amenity and a "grass site" and would not necessarily benefit from a fellow year. They were also implications regarding disrupting annual events at Finsbury Park. If the applicant chose not to run an event in a particular year, this would not be suitable for their business model and could have an impact on the Council attracting organisers for the park

The Cabinet Member RESOLVED

1. Pursuant to Contract Standing Order (CSO) 0.08, to authorise the Corporate Director of Environment and Resident Experience to:
 - a) 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 of the report and
 - b) enter into contract to hire Finsbury Park to the Applicant (for the events detailed in the 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.

Reasons for decision

Under the terms of the Policy, applications of the type detailed in the report were required to be determined with the prior agreement of the Cabinet Member. It was considered that the decision was non-key because it was

(a) not likely to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which was, or the making of savings which were significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service of function to which the decision related; or

(b) 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.

With respect to (b) the impact of the proposed decision on communities was not considered to be significant because the area did not comprise an area of two or more wards. And whilst some Finsbury Park events sometimes received strong local feeling from a selection of the community, there was active engagement and opportunity for stakeholders to feedback. Also, any impacts of the events were not significant and had no lasting effect given the short duration of the events during the year.

If authority was given, then officers would give in-principle agreement to the Applicant for the event applications to progress. The events would then be subject to lengthy discussions with relevant authorities - including Licensing and the Police - before final approval was given.

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.

Alternative options considered

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.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Item 8 was subject to a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contains exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); paras 3 and 5, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

8. EXEMPT - PARK HIRE APPLICATIONS BY LIVE NATION / FESTIVAL REPUBLIC LTD TO HIRE FINSBURY PARK FOR MULTI-EVENT WEEKENDS

The Cabinet Member considered the exempt information.

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor Emily Arkell

Signed by Cabinet Member

Date20 March 2026.....